

## 10 Questions with Chef... Todd English

Prior to his cooking demo as a member of the Macy's Culinary Council in the Cellar at Macy's Union Square, celebrity chef Todd English, clad in black pants and a black dress shirt, sounds like any other guy who travels a lot for a living. "I'm still on East Coast time," he says, sipping a cup of coffee from Boudin Bakery. Despite being named one of *People* magazine's "50 Most Beautiful People" in 2001, English has a slightly quirky, self-deprecating sense of humor, smiling and greeting fans who recognize him from television shows such as the Food Network's *Iron Chef* and PBS's *Cooking Under Fire*, the groundbreaking 2005 chef competition reality series (think *Top Chef* without the glitz and a whole lot tougher).

It turns out English and I have a

few things in common — we're both Italian on our mother's side, we've both spent a lot of time gorging ourselves on steamers in New England (he lives in Massachusetts), and we both count fried baloney sandwiches among our favorite childhood foods (we high-fived over that one).

Jet lagged as he was, English still managed to entertain and educate the audience, all while whipping up a phenomenal lobster stock-based minestrone soup from scratch. After the demo, he grabbed his copy of *Northside San Francisco's* "Top 11 New Places to Eat" and asked me to recommend a spot to take his crew for dinner. I suggested Yoshi's. He nodded and smiled, "Yoshi's is great." Second wind intact, he waved goodbye and disappeared into a sea of shiny All Clad.

**Current projects:** Beso, the Spanish restaurant that he opened with *Desperate Housewives'* star Eva Longoria Parker on March 6, 2008; new PBS series, *Food Trip*, a culinary tour around the world; new book, the artisan *Todd's Table*; bringing outposts of his upscale pizzeria, Figs, to select Macy's Cellars.

**Fun fact:** Todd races sports cars, writes music, plays guitar, and sings. He also appeared Off Broadway in a production called *Chef's Theater*. ("It lasted two weeks but it was a blast.")

**Last thing you cooked for yourself?**

I almost never cook for myself, unless I'm cooking for friends or family. I'm a bit crazy on Sundays — I'll make a huge batch of gumbo with lobster, oysters, rabbit, and andouille, and serve it on brown basmati rice.

**Favorite food from your childhood?**

I grew up partly in the south — fried baloney sandwiches!

**How would you describe working in your kitchen?**

We have fun; fun is big. But we're also focused.

**Something in your fridge or freezer that**



**would surprise people?**

There's a lack of anything in there. (Smiles) Rotten cheese ... and not the noble rotten.

**A meal or a dish that, as a young chef, was an inspiration or a revelation?**

I worked with Jean-Jacques Rachou at La Côte Basque in New York — his cassoulet.

**Last restaurant you ate at?**

The Slanted Door, today, for lunch.

**The dish on your menu that will follow you**

**wherever you go?**

Tortelli of butternut squash with brown butter and sage.

**Favorite offal?**

Definitely sweetbreads.

**What are your guilty pleasures?**

Peanut M&M's and caviar.

**What would your last meal on earth be and where would you have it?**

I would do it in courses with pairings: I'd start with a kilo of beluga caviar with all the fixins — blini, toast points, potatoes — paired with a 1947 Dom Rosé. Next I'd have a huge platter of my nanny's fried chicken with a 1961 La Tâche DRC; for dessert, a huge bittersweet pots de crème with a 1947 Cheval Blanc and an 1889 tawny port. Then I'd dive into a barrel of Armagnac and just drink it all. I'd do it all in the hills of Tuscany.

For more information on Todd English, visit [www.toddenglish.com](http://www.toddenglish.com); for more information on the Macy's Culinary Council, visit [www.macys.com/culinarycouncil](http://www.macys.com/culinarycouncil).

Have a favorite chef you'd like to see interviewed? Send your suggestions to [susan@northsidesf.com](mailto:susan@northsidesf.com).

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who wish to indulge on the premises, Palio will set up a table on the back patio, cut the cigars (they come with a chocolate truffle and a book of Palio wooden matches), and people generally choose a grappa, cognac, brandy, or bourbon to enjoy at the same time. Or you can just take one for the road.

Looks like people will be able to once again say, "Meet me at the Clock." This summer, Michael Mina is launching his first-ever cocktail lounge, *Clock Bar*, in the lobby of San Francisco's historic Westin St. Francis Hotel (335 Powell St.). There will be handcrafted and seasonal cocktails, along with some inventive finger food.

Do you like to cook, or do you only eat out? If the stove doesn't scare you, *Franciscan Restaurant* (Pier 43 ½, 415-362-7733) in Fisherman's Wharf is offering a free recipe book. All you have to do is email comments@franciscanrestaurant.com, request the book, and send them your address. Be sure to tell them the *Tablehopper* sent ya! Soon you'll be all set to make crab enchiladas. Don't forget to invite me.

Marcia Gagliardi also writes a popular weekly e-column about the San Francisco dining scene; subscribe for free at [www.tablehopper.com](http://www.tablehopper.com). She writes additionally for *San Francisco and Travel + Leisure* magazines, and *Fodors.com*. Got a hot tip? E-mail [marcia@northsidesf.com](mailto:marcia@northsidesf.com).