



BRADFORD HEAP....The Journey

Bradford's interest in food started when, at age seven, his mother gave him a recipe for fudge from Irma Rombauer's Joy of Cooking. He soon "mastered the grilled cheese," then graduated to making breakfasts such as omelets and crepes for his family. "I've always loved the magic of cooking and eating good food," he says.

At age 13, he discovered the excitement of a busy kitchen through his first job as dishwasher at the Fleur De Lys in the Hotel Boulderado in Boulder, CO. Several dishwashing, busboy and pizza cook jobs followed. He also worked for his father's construction company, learning much about running a business, but found it lacked the creativity he loved in the kitchen.

His first job as a cook was at Boulder's Elephant Bar, which he helped to open. It was "trial by fire." The restaurant was understaffed, and so busy that at times he had order tickets stashed in his pockets, and with few countertops, the sauté cook was left with no choice but to stack pans of food in every available space. "Let's just say I learned how to remain calm in the worst of situations," Heap chuckles.

His biggest life change came at age 27 when his father helped him go to the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, NY where he realized, without a doubt, his heart's desire to be a chef. He sold his dirt bike and got serious. He dove into culinary school, loved learning new, "proper" cooking techniques, meeting teachers and students from other countries, and discovering a clear sense of direction for his life's work.

While at the CIA, Bradford interned at L'Orangerie in Los Angeles, CA, which was staffed primarily by French nationals and oftentimes frequented by Hollywood stars. He stayed 10 months instead of the requisite 6 months. He learned how to make wonderful sauces, gained experience in all the cooking stations and met several people who were to become valuable connections in his future. It is here that he discovered a passion for French cooking and where he extended his vision to include cooking in France.

He returned to the CIA and graduated with honors in 1990. Their commencement speaker, Julia Child, said something he's never forgotten: "Just because you've graduated from the CIA you are not a chef. You need at least 3-4 more years of training... You need to go out and work with the masters." Heap took her words to heart, next working with Roland Passot, owner of La Folie in San Francisco, CA and then obtaining a sous chef position with Gary Danko at Chateau Souverain in Healdsburg, CA for a year.

Brad learned a great deal from Danko, but was still craved an opportunity in France. One day, he read an article in Art Culinaire about French Chef Alain Ducasse. The Michelin guide awarded 32-year old Ducasse three stars for his restaurant Hotel de Paris in Monte-Carlo. This article set his goal to cook with Ducasse sometime in his near future.

His next job was with Fred Halpert of Brava Terrace in St. Helena, CA. Halpert had previously worked with Ducasse and promised to give him an introduction if he worked as Brava's sous chef for one year. To save money for his European adventure, he worked at Brava Terrace full-time, while simultaneously running a catering company, cooking wine dinners for vintners like Robert Mondavi. To deal with the stress from the extra work he discovered bicycling in beautiful northern California and it too has become a lifelong passion. After completing his year, he had saved \$7,000 and was ready to go. He

packed his knives in a backpack, slung his mountain bike over his shoulder and with some French kitchen slang “in his back pocket,” headed to Europe.

Bursting with excitement about finding himself in Paris, he made many quick friends, danced the discos, generously bought rounds of drinks and quickly found his carefully earned savings depleted after only 3 weeks. It was time to get to work!

A friend helped him obtain a stage at the three-star hotel/restaurant Georges Blanc in Vonnas, France, cooking with the great Georges Blanc himself. Back at the CIA, Heap had read one of Georges Blanc’s cookbooks and had been extremely impressed. “His food and his presentations are unbelievable... that was the chance of a lifetime,” Heap says.

The next stage was served inside the walls of a 13th century abbey at the famed Michelin two-star L’Abbaye Saint-Michel in Tonnerre, France. He learned first-hand about the temperamental stereotypical French Chef who screamed orders from morning to night.

He was expected to pick cherries in the orchard during the day, pluck the ducks, cook at night and sleep in a dirt-walled room that was not tall enough for him to stand in. This, too, he weathered as he soaked in more knowledge of French alchemy, logic, and skill.

Fortune soon smiled on him again. He shared his resume with several yachting agencies, and obtained a fun two-week job on a yacht where he bought fresh food from the markets in the morning, then prepared it on the open sea, for dinner in the evening. At one point, in St. Tropez, they were moored two boats away from Jack Nicholson, who came out in a tuxedo and sunglasses, playing to the crowd. At the end of the job, the owner gave Bradford a \$1,000 tip. A huge and welcome bonus!

Micheline two-star Louis Outhier’s L’Oasis became his next stage and proffered yet another invaluable French experience. Here in the coastal village of La Napoule, he became

competent in the techniques of modern fish cookery, a splendid new focus to add to his repertoire. It was in the market square that the seeds were planted unbeknownst to him which would grow into a lifelong, core philosophy of his kitchen. He learned that cooking happened long before the stove was lit. Outhier taught that first cooking begins with fresh, delicious and seasonal ingredients, and from there the menu is born. This was impressed with each journey to the local markets where he gleaned a daily, weekly, and monthly understanding of a chefs’ marriage to the abundance from the Earth.

And finally, Heap achieved his dream to stage with Alain Ducasse at the Hotel de Paris in Monte-Carlo. The experience far surpassed his imaginings. He left inspired by the combination of French techniques, sauce-making, exquisitely prepared Italian grains/starches, and explosive yet savory Mediterranean flavors. A decade later, when he and his wife Carol returned to Paris, the staff was delighted to see “their Big American Bike Riding Chef” again. They were gifted with a seating at Ducasse’s personal table and were served a meal that lasted for more than 6 hours; they had so many new things to share and much to reminisce about.

Toward the end of his trek in France, with his skill set and his vision expanding daily, Heap still felt something was missing. After a year of vigilant attention to every last detail, carefully executed “proper” technique and prudent specificity with measurements, he realized there was another part of his cooking passion that he wanted to explore — “the intuitive.” It was then he turned his bike toward Italy. He sought the fervor of instinctual creativity, and he wanted to combine his sophisticated French training with the rustic spirit of the Northern Italian kitchen.

Italy was a nice reprieve from the intensity and perfection of the French kitchen, and the Italian culinary style was less about the chefs’ “art,” and even more about the local produce of the region. He gained an appreciation for cooking dishes that are simple, pastoral and in his words, “food forward,” where the flavor of the food is the most important.

In 2008, Bradford and Carol learned that Tom's Tavern, another historic building on the corner of 11th and Pearl, was available. The building had been Tom's for 40 years, an iconic burger joint run by Tom Eldridge who had been well known and loved in the community. They had been interested in that space for years and had even had conversations with Tom about future possibilities. Bradford was one of the first restauranteurs to put his hat in the ring when the location became available. He was told that Tom had written in his will that he hoped a Boulder native would take over the place. They were ecstatic when it became theirs. "Our goal was to respect the legacy of Tom's, the authenticity of the building, the spirit of the restaurant that was so loved," says Vilate, who spent many months

painstakingly renovating, designing and decorating the new restaurant which they call SALT. "Our commitment to using local sources extend to the re-building of Tom's. Almost everything used in the interior is made from recycled and reclaimed materials gathered here in Boulder," she adds.

Heap feels incredibly blessed for the opportunity to do what he loves as his profession, and is grateful to the Boulder community for supporting him for over 15 years. "My intention with my cooking is to bring the freshest ingredients to the plate in a way that lets the flavor shine. Of course living in a mountain climate it is not always possible to buy local but we do the best we can. I really like to buy food from people I know here in the county and support them in what they do." he says.

"...And, for as grateful as I am for all these years, this big adventure, these many opportunities, the hours of training... at home, with the twins, my grilled cheese remains the "family favorite."