



JASON BALESTRIERI
Executive Chef / Partner,
Cantinetta Luca

Jason Balestrieri is executive chef / partner of Cantinetta Luca, Carmel's popular and bustling neighborhood trattoria. Appointed to the position in 2008, Balestrieri offers the pure flavors of authentic Italian food in a casual, modern setting. With deep familial roots in Southern Italian cuisine, Chef Balestrieri specializes in handmade pastas, wood-oven baked pizza, unique varieties of house-cured salumi, roasted whole fish and meats served family-style. In September 2011 Balestrieri launched the neighboring Salumeria Luca, a wonderfully authentic Italian deli and bakery offering high-quality imported and house-made items.

Growing up in Wisconsin, Balestrieri was steeped in his Italian family's deep culinary traditions. After receiving his Culinary Arts degree from the Milwaukee Area Technical College, Balestrieri worked at a Milwaukee neighborhood café before moving to the highly regarded Pfister Hotel, where he trained as line and pantry cook.

The sunny skies of California beckoned, however, and Balestrieri moved to Los Angeles in 1993, accepting a position at Pinot Bistro under chef/founder Joachim Splichal and executive chef Octavio Beccera.

Dedicating the next five years to Twin Palms

in Pasadena, Balestrieri advanced from sous chef to chef de cuisine under chef/owner Michael Roberts, and finally to executive chef at the Twin Palms in Valencia.

In 2000, Jason's association with Joachim Splichal evolved when he accepted a position as lead line cook at Los Angeles' acclaimed Patina. He was quickly promoted to sous chef for Splichal's Cafe Pinot, and for three years worked as executive chef at Pinot Hollywood. Ultimately, Jason became executive chef at Splichal's Nick and Stef's Steakhouse, where he assumed complete responsibility for all kitchen operations of the 250-seat restaurant.

During his time with Splichal, Balestrieri was introduced to David Fink, a close friend of Splichal's and owner of Cantinetta Luca and L'Auberge Carmel. Balestrieri became executive chef at Cantinetta Luca in 2006, and partner two years later.