

# SCENE



*special report*

# Anna Bautista

MADERA RESTAURANT, ROSEWOOD SAND HILL

In the male-dominated world of restaurant chefs, in the testosterone-heavy heart of venture capital country, chef Anna Bautista seems like an unlikely candidate to be running the show. The slender, pretty and soft-spoken 35-year-old chef de cuisine at Rosewood Sand Hill's Madera restaurant admits as much.

Born in the Philippines, her career path first led her to a degree in chemical industrial engineering and then to the financial industry, where she worked as a successful stock trader before deciding to follow her passion and become a chef.

"In the Philippines, cooking, being a chef is frowned upon culturally. My family was not happy when I said I was going to cooking school," Bautista recalls. "But after awhile, they saw how devoted I was to my craft and how happy I was, and they accepted it."

Bautista attended the California Culinary Academy in 2001 and got hired out of school to work at San Francisco's Aqua Restaurant, which she describes as "trial by fire."

"I was so green. I got yelled at a lot. But I think every potential chef needs to have that experience to see if they really want to be in this business and if they're up to the physical stress of it," she says.

After stints as a line cook in several prominent San Francisco restaurants, Bautista struck out on her own, becoming executive chef/partner at the now-defunct Public Restaurant in San Francisco. "It was my first time going for it on my own, making my own mistakes. It taught me

a lot," she says.

When Public closed, Bautista moved on to Nua restaurant in North Beach, then worked as a sous chef at San Francisco's highly regarded Fifth Floor, before executive chef Peter Rudolph pegged her for his chef de cuisine at Madera in 2009.

"Anna has changed the tide here," says Rudolph, who along with Bautista was honored with a prestigious Michelin star in October. "She's got a talent for design and presentation that I think is uniquely hers and uniquely feminine. She's an artist."

He adds that Bautista also has turned the tide on the male dominance of this clubby, venture capitalist hot spot, where the biggest players at Novartis, Tibco and Intel regularly meet for drinking, deal-making and dinner. Since Bautista arrived, she's brought four more female chefs on to help her realize her vision of fresh, local homestyle-with-a-touch-of-Asian cooking, embodied by dishes such as chamomile and tangerine tea-smoked black cod with fingerling potatoes, beets and trout roe.

"I think women in this business have to work harder to overcome the machismo factor," Bautista says. "For a girl to commit to cooking as a career, she's really got to want to do it above all else. And I think more and more, women are showing they can hold their own in the kitchen."

**Madera, Rosewood Sand Hill Hotel,**  
2825 Sand Hill Road, Menlo Park,  
650.561.1540, [MaderaSandHill.com](http://MaderaSandHill.com)



Madera restaurant was awarded a prestigious Michelin star in October. Above, Anna Bautista's rack of lamb and loin, with cumin honey glazed baby carrots, Swiss chard, Madras curry yogurt and dill pickled Mediterranean cucumbers.