

STYLE/BEAUTY  
Edition

LIVING LIKE A LOCAL

# LOCALE

*Orange County*



*Sophia MONDI*

LIVING IN A WONDERLAND



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APRIL 2015

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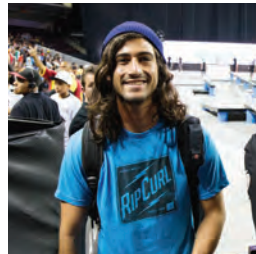
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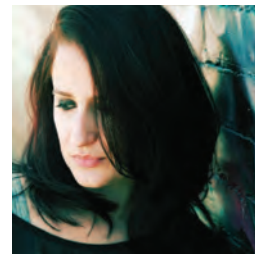
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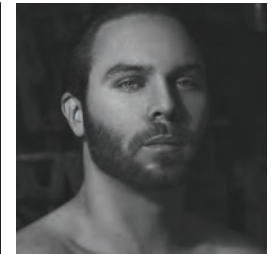
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# NORTHERN LIGHTS

DISCOVERING CHEF RYAN ADAMS' LATEST CULINARY ADVENTURE, THE NORTH LEFT IN SANTA ANA

WRITTEN BY: DEIRDRE MICHALSKI  
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THE EXPERT  
**RYAN ADAMS**  
Chef/Restaurateur

*Favorite "Go-To" Comfort Food:*  
In-N-Out Double-Double

**J**ust like his restaurant Three Seventy Common in Laguna Beach, **CHEF RYAN ADAMS'** latest venture, The North Left in Santa Ana, is a place where guests can enjoy simply great food in a comfortable atmosphere. With the fantastic array of cultural diversity and produce found here in California, Chef Ryan draws on inspiration from so many sources. He enjoys creating inviting, low-key places for dining and friends sharing experiences together.

The North Left is located smack in the newest neighborhood in the midst of a food-centric revival. Within an arm's reach are amazing restaurants, an art district, a thriving weekly farmer's market and a food emporium with guest chef test kitchens on 4th Street. There's a very cool vibe here in Santa Ana as the downtown wakes up to a foodie frenzy.

But what's in a name? Adams named his restaurant The North Left because it's on the left side of Broadway Avenue as you head north. Perfect! Once inside the restaurant, from bustling Broadway, it is a comfortable and rustic vibe, with reclaimed wood on the walls and a welcoming bar with bottles neatly stacked and well lit. There are all black dining booths, just right for slouching—offering cozy comfort. And there are lots of mirrors, so no one misses a thing.

We sat down with Chef Ryan Adams to get his sense of the food scene, learning about how he got started in this business, what inspires him and his own passions in the culinary world.



"I SPECIALIZE IN CREATING DISHES FROM LOCAL SOURCES WHENEVER POSSIBLE—FOOD THAT IS DELICIOUS, COMFORTING, FUN AND REASONABLY PRICED."

— CHEF RYAN ADAMS

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"I SEE MYSELF AS A TRUE RESTAURATEUR, who is driven to help people understand more about great food, and appreciate what dining out is all about. It's about the ingredients, the preparation, and the total restaurant experience. I intend to be working in restaurants for the rest of my life and I want to share my passion for this profession." — CHEF RYAN ADAMS

**Q: Every chef has a story, and we want to hear yours. What was it that drove you into this crazy business of restaurants and bars?**

**RA:** I'm a Laguna Niguel native and graduated from California Culinary Academy in San Francisco. I started honing my kitchen skills at various restaurants in San Francisco including: Stars, One Market, and Vertigo. Then, I moved to Maui and was the chef-de-cuisine at Lahaina Grille. After I had left Hawaii, I worked in Chicago and New York before returning to Orange County to be the opening chef at Citrus City Grille in Old Orange. I also did stints at French 75 and was the corporate chef for David Wilhelm's Culinary Adventures. After that I was the executive chef of Sorrento Grille in Laguna Beach, which I purchased in 2011 and transformed it into Three Seventy Common Kitchen+Drink. I specialize in creating dishes from local sources whenever possible—food that is delicious, comforting, fun and reasonably priced.

**Q: Can you fill in a few details on your culinary experience and training?**

**RA:** I'm a Laguna Niguel native and graduated from California Culinary Academy in San Francisco. I started honing my kitchen skills at various restaurants in San Francisco including: Stars, One Market, and Vertigo. Then, I moved to Maui and was the chef-de-cuisine at Lahaina Grille. After I had left Hawaii, I worked in Chicago and New York before returning to Orange County to be the opening chef at Citrus City Grille in Old Orange. I also did stints at French 75 and was the corporate chef for David Wilhelm's Culinary Adventures. After that I was the executive chef of Sorrento Grille in Laguna Beach, which I purchased in 2011 and transformed it into Three Seventy Common Kitchen+Drink. I specialize in creating dishes from local sources whenever possible—food that is delicious, comforting, fun and reasonably priced.

**Q: Cooking is all about passion and great food. Who inspired you early on, and who inspires you now?**

**RA:** Early on, it was my grandmother and my mother. Working with them in their kitchens was not only an enjoyable experience, but also they prepared foods I really liked to eat. Later, I felt really inspired by the first couple of chefs that I worked under. Today, however, I look for inspiration all over the place, and not necessarily from a person. I can literally just walk around and



#### CHEF RYAN'S FAVORITE KITCHEN TOOLS

**Favorite kitchen gadget:**  
Super Benriner Japanese  
Mandolin

**Favorite kitchen tool:**  
God's Tongs (*My Hands*)

**Favorite kitchen  
appliance:**  
Vita Prep Blender

**Favorite cook-wear:**  
Mauviel Copper Cookware

**Favorite spice:**  
A good sea salt to finish  
a dish

gather great ideas. For example, I may walk past a pine tree that just gives off that fresh, piney scent, and I may feel inspired to somehow incorporate that smell into a particular dish. A few chefs that do come to mind, and inspire me include: Sean Brock (of Husk in Nashville and Charleston), David Chang (a Korean/American chef and owner of Momofuku Restaurant Group and along with Executive Producer Anthony Bourdain, launched a 16-episode series on PBS called "The Mind of a Chef") and Paul Kahan (who lives in Chicago, runs a group of restaurants with his partners, and was last year's James Beard Award winner for Best Chef).

**Q: Do you mentor young adults who are also interested in the culinary industry?**

**RA:** Yes, I get great pleasure from helping others who are aspiring to rise in the culinary industry. One of my greatest success stories actually has to do with the chef who helped open SOL Cocina in Newport and Scottsdale. Early on, he (Octavio Flores) came to me having never worked in the kitchen. We started him out as a dishwasher, and he quickly got moved up to the pantry. Shortly thereafter, he moved to the hot line and being as determined as he was, became my sous chef. Eventually, he went to work for SOL Cocina and became Executive Chef. I must say, I feel partly responsible for his success. My belief was that he could make it—he had that drive. That is one of the greatest enjoyments I can experience in my career—to know that I had a hand in helping someone achieve their goals.

**Q: How do you find great talent for your restaurant and bar? What does the interview process look like?**

**RA:** For our chefs, our interviews definitely involve a bit of cooking. We get the interviewees on the line and have them cook some meat to see if they prepare it to the correct temperature and with the right amount of seasoning. For the bar, we tend to look more at their experience and personality, which is really a key to being a bartender. We keep our interview questions more upbeat—it's actually



a fun experience for many when they hear us ask “Stones or Beatles?” Their answers say a lot about their personality!

**Q: Is that a drawing of you in your logo, and what do these symbols mean?**

**RA:** The logo was designed by the owner Phil Nisco. It actually has a couple of different meanings. It is loosely based on early 1900s apothecary shops, where one would find unusual objects and odd symbols. In fact, there is an old bottle opener from the 1920s that had the face of a guy showing both sides of his face, one side happy and the other side sad. The logo sort of combines the two.

**Q: Can you describe the ambiance at The North Left, and how you want your customers to feel when they are here?**

**RA:** The ambiance is comfortable and casual, and we want our customers to have fun, relax, and be social. We want them to leave here with the feeling that they had a good time, liked the food, and can't wait to come again.

**Q: Santa Ana is becoming such an amazing area of food-centric happenings with many new restaurants, an art district and now a weekly farmer's market. Tell us about how you ended up in Santa Ana, and on Broadway no less.**

**RA:** The owners of the space brought me in to help create the menu for their newly revitalized establishment. I oversee all aspects of the restaurant. They like my approach to a casual, neighborhood eatery and my sense of community commitment—sharing food and good times. What can be better than that?

**Q: What would you say is The North Left's goal as a restaurant?**

**RA:** To put it simply, I would say it is to serve

really good food and drinks in a comfortable and relaxed setting.

**Q: How would you describe your “style” as a chef?**

**RA:** I am all about sustainability and using the freshest ingredients possible. My style can be considered a little bit fusion, but in the sense that contemporary American food is and continues to be influenced by so many different cultures. Southern California has a wealth of diversity in its people and the ingredients we grow and produce. Also, I see myself as a true restaurateur, who is driven to help people understand more about great food, and appreciate what dining out is all about. It's about the ingredients, the preparation, and the total restaurant experience. I intend to be working in restaurants for the rest of my life and I want to share my passion for this profession.

**Q: Without a doubt, your favorite tool in the kitchen is...?**

**RA:** Pardon the pun, but hands down—it would be my hands.

**Q: On the lunch menu I see hearty soups, salads, and sammies. Great line up. How did you come up with the idea for the Government Issue?**

**RA:** The Government Issue came about by chance. One of our employees had been on welfare and got government subsidies. He used to get “issued” not much more than a cheese sandwich, made with cheese that didn't even melt, sort of like being on a soup line in the 1930s and this even goes back to the days of Prohibition. When we created this dish—which is a bacon grilled

cheese sandwich with a small salad, a cup of soup and house-made chips—one of our guys mentioned that it is sort of like the “Government Issue” back in the day. And the name just stuck.



### “THE NORTH LEFT

builds upon traditional American cuisine with a new approach. Our food and cocktails draw inspiration from the Pacific Northwest, but we find our originality through exploring the simple marriage of fresh ideas and quality ingredients.”

— Chef Ryan Adams



**Q: Can you complete this sentence: “I love it when my customers tell me...” ?**

**RA:** I should open a restaurant where they live. I actually hear this quite often from our customers at Three Seventy Common in downtown Laguna Beach, and at The North Left here in Santa Ana. I take that as a true compliment, especially when they come from the bigger foodie cities, like San Francisco, New York and Chicago. That speaks volumes to me, seriously.

**Q: How did you ever come up with these fun cocktail drink names? A Bloody Nail, Twigs & Berries, Moose Knuckle—these are so creative!**

**RA:** Many of our cocktail names come from the warped sense of humor of our team. Others are just variations on a theme from other more commonly known cocktails. Our bar team definitely has a lot of fun with naming our cocktails!

**Q: As for menus, how do you come up with your new menu ideas? Do you collaborate with your team...how does that all come together?**

**RA:** Yes, as a team we are always communicating and coming up with new ideas through our own daily inspirations. It is a fun process, and one of the things that is always interesting because every day is a new day—ever changing!

**Q: When you're not working, what restaurant or bar do you like to go out to and enjoy?**

**RA:** My choices are so varied, since I like so many different styles of food. When I'm not working, which isn't often, I may head to places like: Ohshima Japanese Cuisine in Orange, M.B. Post in Manhattan Beach, Gjelina in Venice Beach, Bestia in Downtown Los Angeles, Honda Ya in Tustin, The Ranch Restaurant & Saloon in Anaheim and Marche Moderne in Costa Mesa, just to name a few.

**Q: So what does a “day in the life of Ryan Adams” really look like? Tell us a little bit about how you do all this.**

**RA:** I typically will start my day at either The North Left, or Three Seventy Common and then switch to finish my day at the other restaurant. Every day brings new challenges and opportunities—that's the life of a chef and restaurateur.

**Q: When you are home, what is your favorite thing to make in your own kitchen?**

**RA:** I don't do much cooking at home since I'm usually in the restaurant, but when I do I enjoy keeping it simple and going with a nice roasted or braised chicken, accompanied by a nice bottle of wine, of course.

**Q: And what would you say is your favorite thing on The North Left's menu to consume?**

**RA:** I absolutely love our vegetable dishes including the Brussels sprouts with hazelnuts, the cauliflower dish with honey, thyme and goat cheese, and our baby heirloom roasted carrots with herb ricotta and pistou.

**Q: I know you probably can't talk specifics, but what's next on the horizon for Ryan Adams? I heard you're cooking up something new and exciting.**

**RA:** As a chef, I'm always interested in growing and enjoy considering new projects and ventures. We have a few things in the works, but nothing official at the moment. ■