

## Chef Thomas Keller

Thomas Keller, one of the most recognized American chefs working today, is as renowned for his well-honed culinary skills as he is for his ability to establish a restaurant that's both relaxed yet exciting. Good food coupled with a memorable social and sensual experience has always been Keller's focus. "Our food is serious," says Keller, "but we also want people to have a good time with it." If the reputations of his restaurants are any indication, he has succeeded.

A native of California, Keller began his culinary career at a young age, working in the Palm Beach restaurant managed by his mother. After serving apprenticeships in Rhode Island, Florida, and the Catskills, Keller relocated to France in 1983, where he worked in several Michelin-starred houses including Guy Savoy and Taillevent. He followed with successful runs at La Reserve and Restaurant Raphael in New York. In 1986, he opened his first restaurant, Raketel, also in New York, which resulted in extensive critical acclaim and a loyal clientele.

Five years later, Keller moved westward to California to work as executive chef at Checkers Hotel in Los Angeles. In 1994, he opened The French Laundry in Yountville, which quickly became a destination restaurant known for its innovative, compelling cuisine. His bistro, Bouchon, opened in Yountville in 1998, with Bouchon Bakery following five years later.



In February 2004, Keller brought his distinct style to New York City with Per Se. The restaurant features Keller's French-influenced contemporary American cuisine presented in a classically elegant space, designed by premier restaurant/hotel designer Adam Tihany. The *Michelin Guide New York City* has given Per Se its most prestigious recognition, a three star rating, for the past three consecutive years. In addition, the *Michelin Guide San Francisco* awarded The French Laundry a three-star rating and a one-star rating for Bouchon in 2007 and 2008--making Thomas Keller the only American-born chef to hold multiple three star ratings since the guide's inception in 1900.

A man of exceptionally high personal standards, Keller values genuine collaboration. He has successfully assembled an expert staff that shares his philosophy and vision, thus enabling him to concentrate on his many varied interests. He is the author of the award-winning "*The French Laundry*" and "*Bouchon*" cookbooks as well as "*Under Pressure*," on the topic sous vide cooking. In 2009 Keller will release his next cookbook dedicated to the same home style cuisine featured at his restaurant Ad Hoc. Keller has collaborated with Raynaud and the design firm Level on a collection of simple, sophisticated white porcelain dinnerware called "Homage" (in honor of the great French chef and restaurateur, Fernand Point); and has launched Modicum, a Napa Valley Cabernet, blended to best accompany the cuisine at The French Laundry and Per Se. Keller has also worked closely with the computer animation studio Pixar, consulting on the film *Ratatouille*, which won the 2007 "Best Animated Feature Film" category at both the Golden Globes and the Academy Awards.

In 2001, Keller was named "America's Best Chef" by *Time* magazine. In 2003, Johnson & Wales University conferred upon him the honorary Degree of Doctor of Culinary Arts for his contributions to the industry. Keller has collected many accolades within the last decade, including consecutive "Best Chef" awards from the James Beard Foundation, the first chef ever to achieve this honor. In 2007 he added their "Outstanding Restaurateur" award to the roster, along with a "Chef of the Year" recognition from The Culinary Institute of America. The Monterey Bay Aquarium recently chose Keller as the recipient of their 2009 Cooking for Solutions Conservation Leadership Award for his leadership and advocacy for sustainable seafood.

Chef Keller now has eight restaurants in the United States. In addition to The French Laundry, Per Se and Bouchon, branches of Bouchon and Bouchon Bakery opened in Las Vegas in 2004. In early 2006, Bouchon Bakery opened in the Time Warner Center in New York City. Ad Hoc, a casual dining establishment inspired by the comfort food he enjoyed growing up, opened later that year in Yountville, California. Keller will open an outpost of Bouchon and Bouchon Bakery in Beverly Hills slated for the fall of 2009.

### **Jambalaya Recipe**

This is a versatile dish that can easily be adapted to individual tastes. The pieces of chicken can be legs, thighs, or breasts. Cut very large breasts in half. If you'd like, vary the type of sausage or add peas or other seasonal vegetables for the final minutes of cooking. Serves 6 to 8.

#### **Ingredients:**

**8 pieces of chicken, skinned**  
**Kosher salt**  
**Canola oil**  
**4 (about 3 ounces each) links of andouille sausage, halved**  
**1 cup chopped yellow onion**  
**3/4 cup chopped green or red bell pepper**  
**3/4 cup chopped celery**  
**1 tablespoon finely minced garlic**  
**1 tablespoon minced seeded jalapeno pepper**  
**1-14 ounce can Italian tomatoes in tomato puree**  
**2 cups chicken stock, homemade or store bought**  
**1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper**  
**Freshly ground black pepper**  
**1 cup brown or white long grain rice, uncooked**  
**6 scallions, trimmed and thinly sliced**  
**12 (about 8 ounces) large shrimp, peeled and deveined**

Season each chicken breast with a pinch of salt. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in your All-Clad 3-quart sauté pan over medium-high heat until the oil is shimmering. Add the pieces of sausage, lower the heat to medium and brown on all sides, about 3 to 4 minutes. Remove the sausage from the pan and add the chicken pieces. Sauté on each side, for about 2 minutes to brown, then remove from the pan. Add the onions, peppers, and celery and sauté gently for a minute, then add the garlic and jalapeno. Cook for about 3 to 5 minutes or until the vegetables have softened.

Working over the sauté pan, lift the tomatoes from the can, one at a time, squeeze them through your fingers, letting the tomatoes and juices fall into the pan. Add any additional puree. Stir in the chicken stock and cayenne pepper. Using 1/2 teaspoon of cayenne pepper will result in a spicy jambalaya. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Bring the liquid to a simmer, stir in the rice, and about two-thirds of the green onion. Nestle the chicken and sausage pieces into the liquid. Cover the pan, lower the heat and simmer gently.

After 30 minutes, check the rice. If it is cooked, leave the pan uncovered. If not, recover and continue to cook a bit longer. Remove the lid and nestle the shrimp in the rice. Cook uncovered for another 5 minutes or until the shrimp are cooked through. Sprinkle the remaining scallions over the top of the jambalaya and serve.