

A Day in “Great Taste” — The Bungalow Chef with David Rosengarten *by Michael Mech - The Bungalow Chef*

Some days my life feels a little like a Hollywood movie or a fantastic novel. Maybe even an Italian Opera. It all depends on what day of the week it is. I want to share with you a little ditty about a chance social-media connection, a scheduled meeting, and a six-hour food tour that could play out as one of the most interesting gastronomic adventures of my life.



David Rosengarten — the legendary chef and culinary genius — posted a story on Facebook. I commented. The next thing I knew, we exchanged a whole flurry of e-mails. Lo and behold, with one message this Chef-of-Chefs promised a meeting *with me* for his next trip to Chicago.

True to his word — this tells you how great he is — I picked him up on a cold November day. His lovely, highly knowledgeable and food-savvy CEO Terry Seal accompanied him. As I drove up to a chic and glamorous Chicago landmark hotel where the two were staying, I thought to myself: *O-M-G*. Needless to say for a food-fanatic guy like me, the fact that David Rosengarten was sitting in the passenger seat of my car, along with his CEO riding “culinary shotgun” — it was a high point of my life. It’s like having black truffles (*Diamonds of Périgord*), foie gras and a luscious ice-cream custard all on the same day.

David’s cooking skills are a mix between the classic cooking of Julia Child with her traditional methods, and the suave, *bon vivant* style of Graham Kerr, *The Galloping Gourmet*. Truly a master culinarian, David proved his legacy as the “Father of the Food Network” with over 2500 shows under his belt. A recipient of the James Beard Award and a renowned author of multiple cookbooks (*David Rosengarten Entertains*, is one of my favorites), numerous publications, food tours, new-and-original content for his own YouTube channel, David Rosengarten is a veritable icon of the real and the virtual kitchen. He also has his own collective of wine, champagne and specialty foods, and has partnered with Petrossian Caviar to co-brand his own caviar line. So you understand the stature of this man as a cooking giant: he even hired Martha Stewart as the caterer to his own wedding.

(Check out his blog and website store at: drosengarten.com)

Now, act two!

There he was, David Rosengarten, sitting next to me in my car! And we were off to the Chicago food races ... from sweet to savory, and back again across the whole spectrum of a mosaic of flavors. While I dodged potholes and prayed the luck of the parking-space-gods be with us, we continued on. We visited and tasted our way through Chicago *iconic* foods: appetizers,

entrees, desserts, and even *snail sausage*. David and Terry commented aptly all the wonderful details regarding the fat, the taste, the texture, the protein molecules, and of course the deliciousness of it all. We explored the whole gamut of what Chicago had to offer: classic foods, comfort foods, nothing was off his list. We were on the most amazing food crawl of Chicago ever, and I was there, together, with him.

As the day came to a close, with David firmly buckled in the passenger seat, I headed to the airport. I had to ask him a question I ask many chefs, but I was most interested in his answer: "David ... who or what was the driving force behind your culinary interest?"

He turned to me and said, "Without question — my father."

He continued, "On Friday nights, my Dad would sit with me at the kitchen table and work out menus, always together." He reminisced, sharing with me a shrimp dish his father prepared long ago.

I've said it before and I'll say it again: food is always is connected to a memory. Those memories are what make us who we are today. When David Rosengarten shared with me his food memories, he shared a deeply-seated part of who he really is. I'm blessed to have had the opportunity to share in his culinary vision.

I can't tell you how many chefs I speak with today who remember tuning-in to watch the classic, stand-and-stir programs like *Taste*.

They watched shows like this in many different places: from upstate New York to Iowa, to even Blue island, Illinois. Watching David work his magic, viewers got a firsthand culinary experience in the comfort of their own homes. I would ask the producers at *Food Network* to please release and reschedule these amazing shows. They're perfect for the education of the next, upstart culinarians.

Thank you David Rosengarten and Terry Seal for the delightful time together. It was the realization of one of my dreams. To borrow from David's famous tagline: "*Grazi, grazi...*" for creating a food-memory for me I will never forget!

