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SAN FRANCISCO RESTAURANTS REAL ESTATE AMERICA'S CUP IMPACT MY SF



## My San Francisco: Delfina's Craig Stoll



Courtesy of Eric Wolfinger

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| Tami Yu | First Posted: 08/29/2011 8:38 pm | Updated: 01/30/2012 6:36 pm

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**Who:** Craig Stoll  
**Years in SF:** 23  
**Current Neighborhood:** The Mission  
**Current Gig:** Running four restaurants, being a husband and father. Just bought a guitar -- hoping to find the time to learn more than the four chords I remember from lessons when I was 10.

**Locanda has been open for over four months. Can you and chef Anthony Strong breathe a bit?**

We're still tweaking things every week -- every day actually -- and will be for years to come. We're still tweaking things at our pizzerias and even at Delfina and we've been open almost 13 years! Breathing's overrated.

**Has Italy inspired any new food directions, in addition to the Roman influence at Locanda?** I try to get to Italy once or twice a year with someone from one of the restaurants per trip. Each and every time we go we learn something new. A lot of something new. One important thing reinforced on my last trip is that "authenticity" is in the eye of the beholder. Even within a specific town, even among the torchbearers of a specific cuisine, there are tons of disagreements about any given dish. I could go on for days, but in the end, this experience really strengthened our confidence in putting our vision of Italian cuisine on a menu and on the plate.

**You Tweeted your excitement at meeting Lorne Michaels.** Delfina's not really a see-and-be-seen sort of place but we do get our share of celebrities. Mostly we just feed them well and give them their space. But SNL has been part of the fabric of my generation's culture -- it meant so much to me over the years that when Lorne Michaels came in I had to go over to his table and say hello. For some reason I got as tongue-tied as a teenage girl. I mumbled,

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'Thanks for everything' and scooted off. He and David Byrne (Talking Heads) are the only stars whose meals I've felt compelled to interrupt.

#### What's your fave old-school Italian establishment?

[Lucca deli](#) on Valencia and 22nd Street.

#### Your fast food or guilty pleasure?

I'm never guilty about anything I eat.

#### Any plans for a fifth restaurant? Is four the magic number?

I can neither confirm nor deny that.

#### What do you love most about SF?

I love the diversity of neighborhoods. I love [The Fillmore](#), [The Independent](#) and [Bottom of the Hill](#). I love the weather -- I never get tired of seeing the wall of fog pour down over the bridge. I love the view looking west, up 18th Street from Delfina as it builds up over Ashbury Heights and Twin Peaks -- never know if it's going to spill over and swallow up the Mission or spare us and our sunny microclimate.

#### What do you hate about SF?

I also hate the cold, gloomy summer weather.

However, I've learned to escape to Marin or Sonoma as much as possible in July and August until our real "summer" comes around in September-October.

#### What's your idea of a perfect day in SF?

It would be a Sunday bike ride with my daughter in Golden Gate Park, followed by lunch at [Zuni](#), [Nopalito](#), or Swan Oyster Depot if it wasn't a Sunday, then maybe play tourist in North Beach. I'd pick up some groceries at [Bi-Rite Market](#) and then cook dinner at home. Family dinner is always the holy grail for us.

#### Being a chef is a really tough gig. Where do you go to recharge?

A bike ride to the headlands usually does the trick. Ride from my house in the hood, up through the Mission (you can smell carnitas cooking in the mornings), wiggle up to Stanyan, out to Arguello, through the headlands, over the Golden Gate Bridge, up to the top of Conzelman Road, through the tunnel to Hawk Hill. Sitting there on a bench, taking in the view for twenty minutes usually helps me get my head on straight.

#### It's a rare night off. Where would you go with Anne for a romantic rendez-vous?

We sneak out for dinner at [Foreign Cinema](#), [Bistro Aix](#) or [Perbacco](#), but a real romantic night out equals a night away -- assuming our daughter has a sleepover. We head up for a night away in Sonoma, Big Sur or Bodega Bay.

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