

Someone's In The Kitchen

When You Know What You Want

By **RICHARD** and **AMANDA PAYATT**
Special to CASA

WE MET BRIAN CHAMPLIN AT THE SEA CENTER'S "Sensational Seafood" evening back in May. He and his Elements catering crew were serving up a delightful canapé of foamed salmon, crowned with a bit of tobiko. His charm, and his food definitely impressed us.

Brian Champlin had a lot of time on his hands when he decided to make the career change and become a chef. After a long and successful career as a web designer in his own start-up, he sold out his shares at age 26 and wanted to find something different to do for the rest of his life. His second love in life was motocross racing. Like programming, he had done it since he was a kid. But at age 28, he was in a terrible accident during a race in Mexico.



Charcuterie Plate

He had three months in the hospital to mull over why he was still alive, and what he wanted to do next. Open another web company? Or, why not try being a chef? He liked that idea.

Brian had always cooked for friends, and it seemed like a direction that he could pursue that would make him happy. Two years at City College, and he was working at Chad's. By the time he left Chad's five years later, he had moved up to nighttime chef. Seeing the happy faces out in the dining room made him feel great. After Chad's came a stint at Epiphany, and a short stay at Mondial, working with Cynthia Miranda. When Mondial closed, Cynthia started M & A

Catering with Brian. But when Andy Winchester of Elements needed a catering team, he hired them both. They put their stamp on the catering.

But, Brian was a man of foresight, business discipline, and determination, and so his role changed. He is now in the position of restaurant General Manager, and Executive Chef, while also working catering with Cynthia. He is friendly, hardworking, smart, funny, organized, and responsible.



Brian Champlin

Elements is lucky to have him.

He has expanded the dimension of house-made food that has long been a part of the restaurant's line up. They make their own focaccia for table bread. They grind their own hamburger meat. They cure their own bacon and deli meats. They make their own red wine vinegar. The charcuterie menu is the perfect example of this idea: potted hough, an old Scottish favorite that is thick and toothsome; bresaola, a sublimely salty Italian alpine treat; pancetta, another Italian and Spanish favorite; and a chicken liver mousse that tastes so much like foie gras that it will make your mouth melt. Brian is even mulling over making house-made cheeses at the restaurant. Until that day, the artisan and farmstead cheeses that they have in the restaurant are simply delightful.

Brian has rebuilt the menus and lowered prices while maintaining the values of local foods and sustainability. The seafood is fresh, served with elegant sauces and glazes. The steaks are thick, juicy, and perfectly prepared. The Sunday Suppers, a steal at \$24.50 a person, are high-class comfort food, elegantly prepared.

For us, though, our favorite

parts of Elements are the things that go on before the restaurant settles down for the dinner rush. Every third Wednesday of the month, Brian teams up with Jessica Foster for a Wine, Cheese, and Chocolate tasting. Three wines, three cheeses, and three chocolates are there for the tasting, along with an information sheet, and plenty of room to take notes. There is the Twittertini Tuesday, a martini special that is tweeted via Twitter. The first one that you have will set you back a modest \$5. Rumor has it that only one person has ever managed to start a third one. And the charcuterie plates come in a wide variety of combinations. Try a 2 + 2 cheese and meat charcuterie plate combination with a glass of wine after work.

For us, the charcuterie and some wine make the perfect compliment to the end of a busy workday. It's the ultimate in comfort food, paired off with a glass of something local. Lounge in the cushions on the back corner sofas or sit outside with an unbeatable view of our beautiful courthouse. Then stretch out your legs. Breathe in deeply. Have another sip of wine. Now that's living.

Elements Restaurant & Bar is located at 129 E. Anapamu St. and is open Mon-Wed 11:30am-9pm; Thu-Sat 11:30am-10pm; Sun 9am-9pm. Reach them at 884-9218.



Amanda and Richard Payatt combine their considerable writing skills with their incredible knowledge and experience of fine dining to bring you this column.