

## CCSF Culinary Arts

# Jeff Hanak

Owner / Nopa, Nopalito, and Liholiho Yacht Club

### WHAT BROUGHT JEFF TO CCSF

Jeff Hanak grew up in San Francisco. As a teenager, "I didn't know what I wanted to do. I'd been working in restaurants," so something culinary-related seemed like a natural direction and most people I grew up with that wanted to go to college started in community college, and then transferred to Cal or State. City College had a great reputation, offered a lot of opportunity, and was reasonable, so that's why I decided to go there."

### JEFF'S CCSF EXPERIENCE

One of Jeff's earliest memories at CCSF is serving a full cafeteria of hungry students. "It was a pretty big responsibility cooking breakfast at 4:35 am before a day of classes." Despite the early mornings, Jeff enjoyed the program. "People weren't just there to get their General Ed out of the way. It was a nice mix, some were starting second careers, some were still trying to figure things out, and some were confident that the hotel or restaurant business was where they were meant to be." Over the course of his time at CCSF, Jeff started to identify with the latter group and in his final semester he landed an internship at the prestigious Four Seasons Hotel.

### JEFF'S CAREER

After graduation, Jeff wanted to study Hotel Administration at Cornell. "Unfortunately, I wasn't able to get in." Dejected, he switched gears, transferred to Golden Gate University and studied Accounting. "I lasted nine months as an accountant before coming straight back to restaurants." Jeff was hired as a manager for Spectrum Foods, "a very rock and roll company opening innovative restaurants." That led him to a partnership offer in a restaurant called Chow. Jeff helped opened three Chows, working alongside Allyson Jossel and Laurence Jossel. The three of whom went on to create Nopa together in 2006. "We had put everything on the line for the new restaurant," and the risk paid off. Nopa become known as one of the quintessential San Francisco restaurants serving an ingredient focused Northern California menu. Building on that success, the trio opened Nopalito in 2009, serving Mexican fare and showcasing the culinary talents of two of Nopa's line cooks. Jeff's latest endeavor is a Hawaiian- inspired restaurant called Liholiho Yacht Club with chef Ravi Kapur. Jeff is happy with his decision to stay in the industry. "I get to work with people from different age groups, backgrounds, and cultures. Every day is something new and I'm as much a therapist and a psychologist as a business man. It's pretty cool."

### WHY JEFF THINKS PROSPECTIVE CULINARY STUDENTS SHOULD CONSIDER CCSF

"CCSF didn't make me a chef straight away, but it taught me the skills I needed to get started and it opened doors that I didn't even know existed." It also afforded him the opportunity to leave school and start working with very little debt. "CCSF is a great first step, it's not going to take you to the top right away, but it's still the best bang for your buck out there. Even more so now that it's free for residents. It's pretty awesome!"

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**Jeff Hanak, CCSF Alumni**

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Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management Class of '87