



## CHEF STEPHANIE IZARD

Although she didn't know it at the time, by the age of 10, Stephanie Izard had already figured out what she wanted to be when she grew up. In her hometown of Stamford, Connecticut, her favorite activity was to play "restaurant," offering her friends and family a menu she created from scratch and then cooking them dishes such as chicken cordon bleu. Influenced by her parent's global cooking and the gourmet club they hosted each month, her love affair with food had already begun. As she grew older she always enjoyed cooking, but somehow thought her career should be business-related. So in pursuit of a non-food career, Stephanie attended the University of Michigan. But she couldn't deny her interest burgeoning interest in food, so she ultimately decided that after earning her degree in Sociology she would go forward and attend culinary school.

After graduating in 1998, Stephanie headed west and earned her Culinary Degree at the Scottsdale Culinary Institute. Finally embarking on her destined career she began as a line cook at French-inspired Christopher's Fermier Brasserie. After 2 years in Arizona, her birth town of Chicago was calling her name, so in a spur-of-the-moment decision, she decided to pack up and move to the great food town of Chicago. She was lured by the wonderful community of chefs and began right away as line cook at Jean Georges' restaurant, Vong's Thai Kitchen. She next moved to the position of roundsmen at Shawn McClain's award-winning New American/Asian restaurant Spring, and afterward became sous chef at the critically-acclaimed French bistro, La Tache.

At La Tache Stephanie was in charge of creating the seafood special every day, and her dishes were so successful that one day a colleague told her she should open her own restaurant. With the extra burst of confidence, a week later she quit and began a new venture. Stephanie has always been driven and a bit of a risk-taker, so despite the lack of a management team or additional resources, in 2004 she opened Mediterranean-influenced Scylla to critical acclaim, and in 2007 Bon Appetit magazine named it one of the ten finest small restaurants in the country. After three busy years of 110-hour weeks, Stephanie decided that it was time to take a break and closed Scylla in order to take some time

to travel and think about her next venture. In addition to exploring new flavors, Stephanie loves to scuba dive, so she headed to Southeast Asia and fell in love with the wonders of fish sauce and the clear warm waters.

On return from her travels, in the fall of 2007 Stephanie received a call from the producers of Bravo's Top Chef, so her life was put on hold and she began competing for the title of Top Chef. She had always been an avid fan of the show (but had to watch via TiVo due to the long hours), so went into it with the wise mantra "Just make it taste good," trying not to worry about the surrounding drama. In the end, her focus paid off and Stephanie came away as the overall winner and was also voted fan-favorite.

While still getting used to the hoots and cheers while walking down the street, Stephanie is now on the hunt for the location of her next restaurant venture. She is thrilled at the prospect of having a team to plan with, and especially excited to build her own kitchen with brand new equipment. The restaurant will incorporate innovative flavor combinations, taking comfort-style dishes to the next level, and the menu is sure to include tons of seafood as well as pork products. Stephanie plans to open the to-be-named restaurant in the spring of 2009 in Chicago, so look out for it!