

GEOFFREY ZAKARIAN

Geoffrey Zakarian's taste and passion for fine cuisine have defined his career which has spanned more than 20 years. An arbiter of style and accomplished chef who has presided over some of the country's top kitchens, Zakarian travels the world on a never ending quest for new ingredients, techniques and challenges to enhance the dining experience at his establishments.

Zakarian's rise to culinary prominence began at **LeCirque** where he took his first job in a kitchen. Over a period of 5 years, he worked his way up from Pastry Sous Chef de Cuisine under Alain Sailhac. In 1987, Zakarian took his first turn as Executive Chef at the legendary **21st Club**. Shortly thereafter in 1988, Jeffrey Chodorow hired him to be the Executive **Chef of 44 at the Royalton**. There, he showed an easy affinity for presiding over a dining room where the food was just as important as the "scene", and the restaurant enjoyed critical acclaim while also becoming a magnet for the city's bold face names. Thus, Zakarian ushered in the era of the sexy hotel restaurant turning "44" into an emblem of 80's chic. In 1995, with his reputation for pleasing both gourmards and scene makers firmly established, he opened the Blue Door at the Delano Hotel in Miami, helping to successfully create another dining hot spot. In 1997, Zakarian became Executive Chef of **Patroon** re-enchanting its existing regulars, as well as drawing a new clientele and earning the restaurant rave reviews. In the successful footsteps of TOWN, he opened Country, bringing distinguished hospitality to a restaurant that speaks of his passion for food and wine, as well for a lifestyle of beauty, grace, and elegance.

Patroon, Town, and Country were all awarded Three Stars from the New York Times, making Geoffrey Zakarian the only chef in New York to earn 3 Three Star reviews in a row. In reference to Town, New York Times restaurant critic William Grimes enthused, "Mr. Zakarian's elegant, clean cooking...seems almost effortlessly assured. With no visible signs of strain, he manages to enliven his dishes with just the half twist that makes them distinctive". Frank Bruni, the current restaurant critic for the Times wrote in regards to Country, "Both [the Café and Dining Room] are first rate experiences, united and distinguished by their classically French inclinations and unusually expert cooking".

In the spring of 2006, Zakarian decided it was time to put his craft and techniques onto paper. His debut book, aptly named, ***Geoffrey Zakarian's Town/Country***, was published by Clarkson Potter. The cookbook had been chosen as an Editor's Choice by The New York Times book reviews and has been noted as "...one of the best of the year," by Amanda Hesser.

To keep his cooking and ideas fresh, Zakarian turns to a variety of sources. He has taken sabbaticals to stage at some of Europe's most notable kitchens, including Arpege, Au Quai des Ormes in Paris, Auberge de l'Ill in Alsace, The Dorchester in London, Le Chantecler with Jacques Maximin in Nice, and Pierre Orsay in Lyon. Fashion and design provide inspiration as well. He explains, "Food goes through similar style trends and redefinitions as fashion. You need to know that landscape to understand how to achieve something timeless".

From years of cooking and traveling in Europe as well as training with top chefs and hospitality masters such as, Sirio Maccioni, Alain Passard and Ian Schrager, Zakarian has developed a keen eye for style and a penchant for restaurant and kitchen design. For both Town and Country, Zakarian engaged renowned architect David Rockwell to turn his strong aesthetic ideas and concepts into something tangible. At Town, grand wood doors greet diners from the street enveloping them immediately towards the "close-quarters" bar. An open staircase delivers guests down into the dramatic 100-seat dining room, while the ceiling races upwards 30 feet. As juxtaposition to the cool modernity at Town, Country is resplendent with many recovered historic details including an original mosaic floor, carved plasterwork in the ceiling and a Tiffany glass dome that presides dramatically over the dining room's ceiling. "It is important that the kitchen space is as clean, elegant and functional as the dining room," Zakarian notes. In his kitchens, one can find tear drop chandeliers hanging from the ceiling, leaded glass windows creating an interior chef's office and sea blue tiles as a back splash to the cook tops. "The cooks work in this environment for hours on end – they must be comfortable and inspired all day." It is here that you can see Zakarian's innate sense of hospitality. He effortlessly weaves style, hospitality and cuisine into one experience for the diner, hotel guest and even, employee.

Such attention to detail and Zakarian's ability to create unique dining experiences has made him a much sought after chef for galas and events. His innovative approach to menu creation has made stand out impressions at such high profile events as Oprah's 50th Birthday Party, Vanity Fair Academy Awards Party and the Whitney Museum of Art's Annual Fall Gala, as well as events for the Guggenheim Museum, Giorgio Armani, Gucci and the Tribeca Film Festival.

Zakarian credits his staying power with a quest for timelessness and an enduring love of restaurants: "I still dream of techniques I can apply to pull intense and interesting flavors out of food. I dine out all the time, first because I love it, second because as a chef, you need to see restaurants from the dining room perspective, not just from the kitchen. As a chef, you have to be vigilant about every facet of the meal."