Savoring Moments, Nourishing Souls

As a young girl, I remember walking down to the store hand-in-hand with my mother and grandmother. I remember wandering down the aisles, carefully picking out the produce I would later help wash and prepare in our family’s kitchen. I remember the smells and sounds of our collective cooking. And most of all, I remember the stories and lessons passed down to me through the love we poured into every meal.

We associate so many of our happiest memories with food. From intimate meals with friends to birthday dinners with loved ones to those special occasions that we capture in photographs and look back on years later, food plays an essential part in our lives, happiness and well-being.

Without food, without farmers and chefs, food scientists and restaurateurs, sommeliers, and supply chain experts, our lives would simply be less joyful. Our homes, less happy. Our birthdays, less celebratory.

I, along with the entire Cal Poly Pomona community, understand the importance of food and hospitality and we look forward to sharing these stories with you in this issue of CPP Magazine. Our students, graduates and members of the Cal Poly Pomona family not only feed our state and nation, but unite us in making memories that last a lifetime.

Thank you all for being a part of our flourishing Cal Poly Pomona family.

Sincerely,

Soraya M. Coley, Ph.D.
President

Whether it be wine, fine dining, coffee or ice cream, Cal Poly Pomona alumni and students have long served as tastemakers in the world of California food and drink.

A sibling duo operates a family-owned taqueria in Montclair, while a pair of sisters is growing a Southern California coffee chain. In downtown Napa, an alumni couple combine their love of winemaking and food to create an unforgettable "studio" experience.

Bronco tastemakers use their education and career experiences in business, hospitality and dining to make an impact on global restaurant brands, such as Din Tai Fung, as well as home-grown startups. They are blending their talents, new ideas and desire to serve others to create the perfect recipe for success.
Big Things are Brewing as Heather and Holly Perry Grow Klatch Coffee

By Clay Fowler

As college students, Heather and Holly Perry were both equally certain of one thing: their career plans did not include a stop at Klatch Coffee, the family business. Heather graduated from Cal Poly Pomona in 2004, unwaveringly on course to become a lawyer. Younger sister Holly transferred to CPP a few years later as a marketing student intent on starting her own business.

But 20 years later, Heather ('04, international business and marketing) is the CEO of Klatch Coffee, overseeing one of the fastest-growing brands in the coffee industry. Holly ('12, hospitality management) is the company's director of retail, overseeing the regional chain's growing number of cafes. The duo is sprouting their family business' artisan roots into thriving branches that include wholesale, e-commerce and retail cafes.

Their parents Mike and Cindy Perry opened Klatch Coffee's first cafe in Rancho Cucamonga in 1993, meant to be a temporary venture until their father "got a real job," Heather recalls. The Perrys opened a second cafe in 1997 and began roasting beans on a small scale in their new San Dimas location.

Klatch has grown from 30 employees in 1997 to nearly 200 in 2024. Earlier this year, the company opened a 16,000 square foot roastery in Upland to expand its capacity to use the beans they meticulously source from partners around the world.

As kids and through college, Heather and Holly worked for the family business in various capacities, never intending to transition to the roles they occupy now.

They both couldn't be happier to be wrong.

"I never actually decided I was going to work in the coffee business," Heather says. "I just never went to law school."

Says Holly: "I always knew I wanted to do my own thing, own my own business, because that's what my parents demonstrated to us. It wasn't until a couple of years ago that I finally let that go because I was having so much fun working for my family business."

Holly, who is overseeing Klatch's expansion into Sprouts Farmer's Markets — Sprouts will sell bags of Klatch coffee on grocery shelves and have Klatch cafes inside five of their stores by the end of 2024 — is living out her passion for the customer experience.

Her affinity for hospitality was born when her parents opened their first Klatch cafe in Rancho Cucamonga, giving their 5-year-old her first taste of the customer service experience.

Fast forward to her time as a college student at CPP's The Restaurant at Kellogg Ranch (RKR). Holly had her full-circle moment when she managed the RKR's front-of-house operations.

"I love it when a customer comes in open minded and doesn't know what they want. That's when I get to help them find their perfect meal that they never would have ordered for themselves," Holly says. "That's what I love doing at Klatch. The RKR is where I discovered that's for sure what I love to do."

When she graduated from CPP, Heather's coffee prowess combined with her business education put her on a trajectory to be the ideal CEO of a coffee company.

Heather applied her business acumen as she ascended from member to board member to president of the Specialty Coffee Association (SCA), which merged the U.S.-based organization with its counterpart in Europe during her tenure. Networking with coffee industry titans around the world through the SCA, trade shows and barista competitions allowed Heather to build Klatch into an internationally known company.

"Yes, there are stressful days, but I love what we get to do, love our team members, love the people we meet through our business," says Heather, who won the 2003 and 2007 U.S. Barista Championships. "It's a good thing I didn't become a lawyer."
A key ingredient in the recipe of James Fu’s success in the restaurant industry was early advice from a mentor to find and follow his passion. Fu’s (’18, hospitality management) deep dive into STEM classes at Pasadena City College and planning to pursue a degree in engineering when a physics professor observed that Fu had the ability to do the coursework, but he didn’t feel Fu’s love for it.

“He asked me, ‘How would you feel if you didn’t have the passion for it? Would you be OK?’” Fu says. Fu, who was already working in the restaurant business at the time—he was a server at a hot pot restaurant and later ran a popular boba shop—realized that becoming an engineer was more about pleasing his parents than pursuing his purpose.

What Fu loved was working in restaurants. “I have always had a passion for serving guests. That’s what makes me fulfilled,” he says. “It is something you can see directly because you interact with the guests. You can see if they are satisfied. Guest satisfaction is something I really care about.”

**COOKING UP COMFORT**

Fu, who was born in Oakland and raised in Taiwan and Belize, has been working at the popular dumpling chain Din Tai Fung for the past 10 years, putting his guest satisfaction skills to the test. He started as a busser and was promoted to server in a couple of months. The job helped him pay his way through Cal Poly Pomona’s hospitality management program. After earning his degree, Fu advanced to manager, general manager, regional manager and most recently the company’s corporate chef in 2022.

His role involves visiting various locations, mostly in California and the Pacific Northwest, to audit the company’s high standards. He assists with the opening of new restaurants, helps train staff and makes sure the recipes are clear and easy to follow. Din Tai Fung, which got its start in Taiwan 50 years ago, is now global with more than 170 locations around the world. The United States has 14 locations, including the art of crafting Din Tai Fung’s iconic xiao long bao or soup dumpling. Recently, he added a new item to the menu—a chicken soup dumpling inspired by the ultimate comfort dish, chicken noodle soup.

Fu developed and tested 30 to 40 recipes before coming up with the final version, even letting his mom test taste it before it was finalized. Din Tai Fung is known for its pork soup dumplings, but it wanted a recipe that was more in line with what customers in the United States prefer.

“For the American market, pork is not the top choice. Chicken is a better option. That’s why we had the goal to create chicken soup dumplings,” Fu says. “It’s something we had to build from scratch. And it gives you that comfort feeling because you can really taste the chicken noodle soup.”

**DEDICATED TO SERVICE**

That desire to give comfort to others is who Fu is, says Margie Jones, dean of The Collins College of Hospitality Management. His hospitable nature and desire to make others happy is something that Jones observed when Fu worked at The Restaurant at Kellogg Ranch (RKR), where he was a student assistant to the instructor.

“It’s an honor to be a student assistant in the restaurant; it shows that you have demonstrated in the course that you have the skillset and ability to lead your peers,” Jones says. “He was wonderful and made the students feel comfortable.”

In Jones’ Wines of the World advanced course, Fu also served as a teaching assistant, preparing food that would pair well with the wines the students were tasting.

“He came with a foundational understanding of cooking,” she says. “If I was doing a French wine and wanted to have roast chicken with it, he knew how to do it. It was second nature for him to take it to a place where it could be easily eaten. It was nicely seasoned. He has a good palate.”

Fu still gives back to CPP, participating in career fairs and volunteering to serve as Professor for a Day. He credits the hospitality program, particularly his time at The Restaurant at Kellogg Ranch with helping him get to his current level of success.

“I loved RKR so much,” he said. “At RKR, I started as front of the house, but I needed to challenge myself. I told the professor I wanted to go to the back of the house, to do food preparation. I still implement a lot of the knowledge I learned at Collins today.”
On a spring morning in downtown Napa, music flowed out of the open windows and doors of a midnight blue 1926 craftsman bungalow.

Inside, sunlight floods an open kitchen as Joey Wolosz (’98, hospitality management) rolls out the dough for pierogi, Polish dumplings filled with potatoes and cheese, while Jeff Durham (’89, hospitality management) pulls out samples of his homemade take on the snack Cracker Jacks and wine gummies.

The couple opened the doors of their Gentleman Farmer Bungalow in December, dubbing it a “Studio for Gustatory Well-Being.”

“We wanted to have a social space where we can host people and have them experience our wines and have that in the context of food,” Durham says.

Before they opened the doors to the Napa house, Wolosz and Durham hosted a similar tasting experience in their Yountville home, where they would serve meals of six or seven courses along with their own Gentleman Farmer Wines.

A trip to France in 2017 served as the inspiration for the venture. Wolosz recalls that a friend made a wine tasting reservation at Chateau Margaux.

When they arrived, the host asked if they “will have had lunch?” The food was delicious. When they arrived, the host asked if they “will have had lunch?” The food was delicious.

“Every single day we’re here, our doors are open, whether we’re just greeting a neighbor who wants to see what the place looks like, because they are here to help them make the most of that time. So, it started to come to me that Jeff and I, our lives are a vacation. It’s all about relationships.”

After Durham graduated from Cal Poly Pomona, he worked in hospitality at the Four Seasons Hotel in San Francisco. “What I learned is that it is not enough to just meet expectations for guests,” he says. “You need to exceed their expectations. So that’s always been with me since 1989.”

For both Durham and Wolosz, their upbringing helped prepare them for what they are doing now. For both Durham and Wolosz, their upbringing helped prepare them for what they are doing now.

In the early 1980s, Durham’s family began farming grapes in the Oak Knoll region of Napa Valley, 22 acres total. Durham and his siblings worked at the vineyard after school, on weekends and during vacations. He learned vineyard management, trellising, pruning and harvesting. The family sold the

Wolosz and Durham started making wine together in 1999 out of a garage. They launched Gentleman Farmer Wines in 2005 with the guidance of a local wine maker, beginning with about 80 cases. Their lives had many parallels. Both graduated high school in 1985, attended a community college before transferring to Cal Poly Pomona in their sophomore years and both shared the same major.

Although their time at Cal Poly Pomona overlapped, they didn’t know each other as college students. Through a concurrent enrollment program, Wolosz took classes at both Cal Poly Pomona and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, where he grew up, taking his time to complete his studies.

“Everybody in front of me is on vacation,” Wolosz says. “They are here to enjoy themselves. I also don’t feel like I am working. So, it started to come to me that Jeff and I, our lives are a vacation. We are on everybody’s vacation.”

“I am doing what I love to do, which is hanging out in the kitchen and visiting with people.”

The bungalow’s guests are there to enjoy their time away from work and daily life, and Wolosz and Durham want to help them make the most of that time.

“The public is welcome to drop in and say halo. “Every single day we’re here, our doors are open, whether we’re just greeting a neighbor who wants to see what the place looks like, because we’ve been under construction for three years, or welcoming someone who made a reservation for a three-hour lunch,” Durham says. “It is our job to exceed expectations on hospitality. Hospitality is in everything we do, whether it be the hotel or whether it be this business.”
“It’s fun to see SingleThread grow from what it was at the start to where it is now,” Shah says. “The farm was just getting developed when I first worked there, and now it is so much more. It’s a great place to work and it’s a pleasure to see how much the staff and guests enjoy their time here.”

SingleThread includes a 24-acre farm, a 52-seat restaurant and a five-room inn in Healdsburg. As the director of hospitality, Shah oversees all operations for the business, which has 127 employees, and ensures that the high standards set for service are maintained. It’s also an opportunity to mentor.

“With many businesses, a lot of people don’t really focus on the people working for them,” Shah says. “We are here to help people grow. Everybody is here for a purpose. For some, here is where they start their careers. We are helping them along the way so that they can use their experience here as a stepping stone.”

The restaurant is ranked No. 46 in the world, and is named one of the Best New Restaurants in America by Yelp. Shah attributes much of the restaurant’s success to the mentorship that he received as a student as his motivation to pass on the same care and attention to detail.

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Food always has been at the center of Shah’s life. Growing up in Virginia and San Diego, he came from a family that cooked together. Those moments in the kitchen fueled his own passion for cooking and food.

As a teen, Shah worked as a line cook at a few restaurants and debated whether to train as a chef at the Culinary Institute of America in New York or go the business route at Cal Poly Pomona. He chose CPP.

“I loved cooking and still cook all the time, but I think my idea of a career in the culinary world shifted while I was at The Collins College from being a chef to taking on more of a managerial role,” Shah says, who particularly enjoys cooking Indian and Ethiopian food. Shah attributes much of his success to the mentorship that he received at Cal Poly Pomona, especially as a student chef at The Restaurant at Kellogg Ranch.

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Her students were required to write “love notes” or training notes for the next generation. “I have had my share of ups and downs,” she says. “I was the head chef when I started, and then I ended up being general manager or restaurant manager where I was learning to run a restaurant and a five-room inn in Healdsburg.

As the production manager in the restaurant class, he was tasked with supervising the student chefs and making sure they didn’t run out of needed supplies. “He was outstanding,” Bruin says. “He really had a good eye for detail.”

“Her students were required to write ‘love notes’ or training notes for the next person in their position. After being in charge of the beverage station, Shah left notes that included photos of what the lemon slices should look like, a diagram of where the sugar carriers and slicer should be placed, and tips on how often to wash the containers for the creamer. Bruin says she is overjoyed to see Shah’s success. “I am happy as a lark,” she says of Shah’s accomplishments. “I am a proud mamma to see where my students go and what they do. I have seen them when they start out and drop trays, and then they end up being general managers or running hotels and restaurants.”

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

After graduation, Shah was selected for the management training program at the JW Marriott in San Francisco. From there, he became the assistant food and beverage manager for the hotel. He was at Marriott for a little over a year, trying to figure out if he wanted to remain in hotels or switch to stand-alone restaurants. He accepted a position with the Michael Mina Restaurant Group, a San Francisco-based restaurant company founded by Mina, an award-winning chef.

Shah held various management positions at several of the group’s establishments in San Francisco, including Aqua, Bourbon Steak and Clock Bar, a high-end lounge serving specialty cocktails and gourmet bar food.

“It was good for me because I was young and needed a swift kick,” he says of his three years with the Mina Group. “I learned a lot about spirits, craft cocktails and fine dining.”

Shah worked a stint at RN74, a Burgundian-style French bistro for a while before deciding to team up with fellow Cal Poly Pomona alumnus and chef Matt Cruz (13, hospitality management). He and Cruz helped open Lazy Bear, a modern American restaurant in San Francisco’s Mission District that earned two Michelin stars.

It was at a party at Lazy Bear when Shah met one of the investors of SingleThread. That chance meeting led to a job offer to help husband and wife team Kyle and Katrina Connaughton — the executive chef and culinary garden/farm manager respectively — open their new venture in Sonoma County. He initially started as a captain, which in the hospitality industry is a supervisory role.

Shah also found love at SingleThread. His wife, Marley Brown, is the head chef, and the couple is expecting their first child in June.

SingleThread’s dinner menu is an 11-course tasting that features fish and vegetarian options. The Japanese-influenced dishes are health-focused and revolve largely around what is harvested at the 5-acre farm nearby in the San Lorenzo vineyard area. The restaurant is ranked No. 15 in the world, and SingleThread is just one of 13 in the United States to have earned three Michelin stars.

“15

To be able to be a part of opening one of the leading restaurants in the United States makes me feel very lucky and fortunate,” Shah says. “A lot of my success is attributed to what I learned at Cal Poly Pomona.”
When you walk into Al Pastor Taquería in Montclair, the aroma of seasoned meats and the warmth of handmade tortillas transport you straight to the heart of Mexico City. It’s not just the food that makes this taquería a neighborhood favorite, but it’s the Cal Poly Pomona sibling duo behind it — Joseph and Brenda Haro — who are blending family tradition with distinctive flavors.

Joseph, a business student studying computer information systems at CPP, grew up in his father’s restaurant, El Ranchero in Claremont, where he learned the art of Mexican cuisine from the ground up. His sister, Brenda, a 2017 Cal Poly Pomona alumna, researched the culture and flavors behind successful taquerías. In developing the concept for Al Pastor Taquería, Joseph wanted to combine fine dining techniques with the comfort of casual street food. In 2022, Joseph and Brenda traveled to Mexico City to learn the culture and flavors behind successful taquerías. “We met with different chefs and visited numerous taco spots. I created various recipes until we narrowed it down to the recipe that took us down the streets of Mexico with every bite,” Brenda says.

When Joseph spends most of his time in the kitchen, he chose to major in computer information systems when he applied at Cal Poly Pomona, so he could learn about information security. While Joseph spends most of his time in the kitchen, Brenda’s path into the family business was slightly different. During college, she worked at the Mexican chain restaurant El Toreo and helped with administrative tasks at her father’s restaurant, El Ranchero. She also interned in the human resources department at a Marriott hotel in Ontario, where she learned about the hospitality industry.

Her degree in management and human resources gave her the skills to oversee the administrative, operational and marketing aspects. She serves as the restaurant’s human resources and marketing director. “Every single item is made with passion. I want people to enjoy my food and feel the same emotion I had when I created the dish,” says Joseph, who is the CEO of Al Pastor Taquería.

While Joseph spends most of his time in the kitchen, he chose to major in computer information systems when he applied at Cal Poly Pomona, so he could learn about information security. With the skills learned through his major, he set up the restaurant’s network and applied operations management knowledge to track and analyze inventory.

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Brenda and Joseph credit their parents as their mentors and role models. They learned about hard work and dedication to quality from their father Jose, while their mother Letícia’s nurturing spirit shaped the way they communicate with customers. Al Pastor Taquería recently became a member of Montclair’s Chamber of Commerce and hopes to expand in the future.

Richard Krumwiede '84, Landscape Architecture Owner, Sycamore Ranch Vineyard & Winery

After launching a successful landscape architecture business, which recently celebrated its 33rd anniversary, Richard Krumwiede decided to explore another one of his life’s passions. In 2007, he planted a wine vineyard at his mountain home. A few years later, he embarked on a wine co-operative with friends and then launched Sycamore Ranch Vineyard & Winery in Crestline in 2015.

Both landscape architecture and winemaking feed his creative muse. “In landscape architecture, the reward is seeing our idea come to life in the built environment and enhancing people’s lives. In winemaking, I enjoy taking a raw ingredient, grapes, and transforming them into inspired, award-winning wines,” he says.

In 2019, Sycamore Ranch won first in Sunset Magazine’s International Wine Competition and the top spot at the Orange County Fair’s Commercial Wine competition in 2021. “Cal Poly Pomona’s motto ‘learn by doing’ has been a big part of my success,” Krumwiede says.

Mara Caitlin Roche ‘06, Communication Owner, Aunt Momo’s Partner, Roche Winery

After graduating college, Mara Caitlin Roche returned home to Sonoma and did direct-to-consumer sales at Roche Winery. Occasionally, she helped the head chef in the kitchen during large events. Soon, she stepped into the kitchen full-time and launched her catering company, Aunt Momma’s, in 2019. She’s particularly known for her cheese cookies — “Yep, a cookie made out of cheese.”

“My talent is being able to feed large groups, so I try to help out nonprofits with their events or food programs. I helped a local senior center launch their weekly soup and super program, where local seniors can have a home-cooked meal and dine with other local seniors,” Roche says. “During the 2017 wildfires, I helped with the logistics of distributing over 4,000 meals a day to displaced locals and first-responders; all the meals were donated by Bay Area businesses.”
As a kid, my introduction to homemade ice cream was from my next-door neighbor. Every Fourth of July, he would pull out an old-school hand crank ice cream maker and make ice cream for all the kids in the neighborhood. I was blown away by how good ice cream could taste when made with simple ingredients. It was an experience I will never forget and one that ultimately has shaped my passion for it.

At a young age, I started to try out recipes on my friends and family and fell in love with the ice cream-making process, from producing the perfect custard base to creating new and exciting recipes.

The idea of starting an ice cream business climaxed when I was a student in The Collins College of Hospitality Management at Cal Poly Pomona. As a requirement of the program, I landed an internship at Dr. Bob’s Ice Cream of Covina — where Bryan and I had lived as roommates while attending Cal Poly Pomona — landed on Yelp’s Top 100 ice cream shops in the nation.

Unfortunately, we finished construction of our production kitchen at the height of the pandemic and were forced to pivot our operations online. Selling our pints out of our Montclair warehouse nationwide kept us afloat during the worst years of the pandemic — and we were proud to bring a bit of joy to our customers during tough times.

In July 2022, our dream of opening a physical location came to life. Our first scoop shop in the city of Covina — where Bryan and I had lived as roommates while attending Cal Poly Pomona — landed on Yelp’s Top 100 ice cream shops in the nation.

Today, three of our most popular ice cream flavors are available in all 28 Pavilions grocery locations in Southern California. Our ice cream can also be found across CPP’s campus stores and dining areas.

It feels full circle to have the ice cream we fell in love with as kids on our menu today. We are so excited to see what the future holds for Scoops on Tap and continue to elevate the ice cream to a whole new level with craft beer.