



Lissa Doumani, Owner

Lissa Doumani's luscious desserts may have earned her the nickname "Pastry Princess," but the fortysomething pastry chef is anything but a prima donna. As the front-woman, accounting maven, and dining room and pastry manager for Napa Valley's Terra and San Francisco's Ame she hardly has time to perch on fluffed pillows and eat bonbons while her prince, husband/chef Hiro Sone works the pots and pans.

Co-owner Lissa was born into the world of food and wine. As the daughter of Carl Doumani, owner of Stags' Leap Winery and one-time restaurateur, she spent the first half of her childhood in Los Angeles where her father owned Mexican restaurants. The second half of her youth was spent surrounded by the vineyards and culinary culture of Napa Valley. In both locales she and her family cooked together with regularity. Lissa enjoyed the closeness, bantering, and bickering that went on in the kitchen. By the time she was 12 she knew a restaurant was in her future.

Lissa's gregarious and confident nature came in handy long before she began welcoming customers at Terra. Upon graduating from high school she started college and briefly worked her way up from dishwasher to pantry in a Yountville restaurant owned by original French Laundry owner Sally Schmitt. But 1982 was the fateful year that she talked her way into a pastry apprenticeship at Wolfgang Puck's renowned restaurant Spago Hollywood—despite the fact that she had little formal training. Under the tutelage of famed chef and baker Nancy Silverton, she came into her own and secured a position as pastry chef.

Her job at Spago provided Lissa with more than newfound skills. It was in Wolfgang Puck's kitchen that she met her future husband and business partner, Japanese chef Hiro Sone, who was training to open Spago Tokyo.

In 1983 the adventurous chef headed to Sydney, Australia, where she designed pastry programs for two hotels over six months, then headed to Tokyo to teach pastry techniques to the Japanese chefs at Spago Tokyo. After a two-month stay and a rekindling of her budding romance with Hiro she and the Japanese chef returned to Los Angeles to embark on life together. Hiro oversaw the kitchen at Spago Hollywood, while Lissa wowed diners and received rave reviews as pastry chef at Roy Yamaguchi's restaurant 385 North.

Soon afterward, Lissa's entrepreneurial spirit and a stunning available restaurant space in Napa Valley beckoned her to return to Northern California. In 1988 she and Hiro opened Terra, a nationally acclaimed restaurant celebrating the couple's culinary expertise, travel experiences, and preference for intimate, world-class dining. Since then she has greeted guests, made sure the bills are paid, orchestrated the décor and staff, and wowed guests nightly with gorgeous and decadent yet refined desserts.

Not one to rest on her laurels, Lissa co-authored with Hiro Terra: Cooking from the Heart of Napa Valley (Ten Speed Press) in 2000 while overseeing the dining room and pastry program. In November 2005, the couple opened Ame in San Francisco where they continue to delight guests with the signature taste of their wine country restaurant. Today her precision management and attention to detail is a primary reason that after 15 years in business Terra is still one of the most cherished dining experiences in Napa Valley, and why Ame is sure to follow in her big sister's footsteps.