

Mediterraneo

A healthy revival at the Westlake Village Inn

by Dianne Porchia

In 1968, visionary real estate developer and philanthropist John L. Notter founded the Westlake Village Inn in a part of Southern California that, 40 years ago, was considered no man's land. Since then, this high-net-worth enclave straddling the border of Los Angeles and Ventura counties has grown enormously in size and sophistication.

Just last year, the beautifully landscaped 17-acre hotel property went through major renovations, including a revamp of its Mediterraneo restaurant, headed since March by Alberto Vazquez, Director of Culinary Operations, who has upgraded the menu to meet discerning, health-conscious palates.

"I never imagined myself working here," says Vazquez. "But we are now listed in Summit Hotels & Resorts and are part of the Preferred Hotel Group, and my position allows me to create something great."

To complement Mediterraneo's distinctive talent in the kitchen, the restaurant hired Certified Sommelier Dan Margolis to head up the wine program. The 27-year-old not only knows wine, but also understands the



Dan Margolis, General Manager and Sommelier at Mediterraneo in Westlake Village, CA.

concept of restaurant wine service. His creative wine flights and food pairings arouse continued interest from guests.

"I perceive winemakers as artists," Margolis tells THE TASTING PANEL. "That inspires me to think about how to best show off what they've produced, and what better way than expressing flavor profiles with great cuisine?"

Mediterraneo, 32037 Agoura Road, Westlake Village, CA; 818-889-9105



Meet Chef Alberto Vazquez

"My father was a chef, so I grew up in his kitchens with a spatula in my hand," explains the self-taught Alberto Vazquez. "I was given my first chef title when I was 17 years old."

In June 2008, Vazquez created Mediterraneo's Culinary Arts Series of cooking classes for kids and adults. This summer he presides over grilling classes in the outdoor gazebo, and eventually he expects to complete a cookbook to sell in the hotel and restaurant. ■■



Striped bass Livornese is one of Vazquez's signature dishes.