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## Atelier Crenn's Chef on Local Farms & Beating Iron Chefs

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Female chefs are a rare breed in the culinary world, and it's even rarer to find a chef as highly passionate as Dominique Crenn. The spirited French native began her formal training in San Francisco over two decades ago, cooking in some of the most notable kitchens in the city, including Luce. From earning a Michelin star to beating out Michael Symon on "Iron Chef America," Crenn is now running Atelier Crenn, her new 40-seat restaurant in Cow Hollow. Described as "Poetic Culinaria," the fantastical menu engages modern concepts of molecular gastronomy, as well as embracing the use of local farmers. Crenn tells us all about her culinary heritage, which local chefs earn her respect, and what San Francisco restaurant feels most like Paris, aka home.

### How did you get involved with Gouge Eye farm, and what produce are they supplying for Atelier Crenn?

We decided to partner up after Scrivner Hoppe-Glosser, the farmer, was waiting my table at Zuni, and I flirted with him. We struck up a conversation and realized that it would be a great partnership. His farm provides Atelier Crenn with 60 percent of the unique and eclectic ingredients on the menu. We hope to source more ingredients in April -- right now we're using their sunchoke, wild nettles, and foraged herbs. They also have a greenhouse that's growing micro herbs and baby vegetables. They will also raise Muscovy ducks and we plan to use their chickens and eggs.



### What can we expect from your new menu?

We will be altering our menu seasonally, depending on the products we receive from the farm along with new inspirations that come to me and my team. We try to do our own cuisine and create what inspires us.

### When did you decide that you were going to become a chef?

My mom's culinary skills were always admirable, and I told her at age 8 that I wanted to become a chef. Growing up in France, food had always been a large impact on my life. Both of my parents came from a farming background. They grew up in their family farms, and they really understood the land, food and animals. My brother and I were also taught about such values at a young age. We spent our vacations at the farms in Brittany, and my family still owns them today.

### What was it like battling against Iron Chef Michael Symon?

It was a large-scale competition, much larger than anything I've ever done. I didn't train for it, as we only learned about it three weeks prior. My two sous chefs and I worked together for many years and we just went in the Kitchen Stadium and understood each other. You just have to be confident. We presented a different, more appealing cuisine. Michael Symon is a very talented chef, but I had a good feeling after the judges evaluated our food. I am honored to compete with him.

### Which local Bay Area chefs do you admire?

Daniel Patterson, Michael Mina, David Kinch and Jeremy Fox. These chefs came into the food scene with their own vision, believing in their own philosophy and respecting the ingredients. It's really commendable. They went for it, and there's a lot of risk involved. We don't make money in the restaurant business, you do it because you love it.

### What are some of your favorite hangouts in the city?

I live across the street from **Bar Jules**. The food is always fresh and good. You can grab a bite at the bar or go with friends at brunch. I used to go to **The Slanted Door** when it was on Valencia Street. I'm a big fan of Charles Phan, and I respect him as a chef. When I first went to **Zuni Café**, it felt like I was in Europe or New York City. It's very welcoming, like a Parisian bistro. I love their open kitchens and everyone is so nice.

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[Atelier Crenn](#), 3127 Fillmore St.; 415-440-0460

**Quick Guide to Dominique Crenn's Faves:**

[Bar Jules](#), 609 Hayes St.; 415-621-5482

[Zuni Café](#), 1658 Market St.; 415-552-2522

[The Slanted Door](#), 1 Ferry Bldg. #3; 415-861-8032

*Photo Courtesy of Atelier Crenn*



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A San Francisco native, Tami loves to write about dining, fashion, beauty and travel. She has also written for AOL Digital City, Caviar Affair magazine and AOL's When.com.

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