

the girl & the fig



Just like a plump ripe fig, the girl & the fig food is fresh, healthy and bursting with flavor. With a seasonal menu featuring sustainable and locally sourced ingredients, garden vegetables, herbs, and an abundance of creativity, the rustic Provencal-inspired cuisine allows Mother Nature's true and natural flavors to flourish.

Owner Sondra Bernstein quietly opened the girl & the fig in 1997 originally in Glen Ellen, California. Slowly people began to discover the rustic French food and the distinctive way of marketing and presenting it. In 2000, she relocated the restaurant into more upscale quarters on the northwest corner of the Plaza in Sonoma in the historic Sonoma Hotel. Over the past fourteen years, the girl & the fig has made its mark in Wine Country becoming a favorite for both locals and visitors. the girl & the fig continues to be featured in many magazines as well as on national television.



One of the signature dishes is a unique salad prepared with arugula, goat cheese, pancetta, pecans, and grilled figs in season. Other imaginative native entrees feature local seafood, lamb, rabbit, and duck—all served with a wonderful array of grains, pastas, and fresh vegetables. The reasonably priced wine list - winner of Wine Spectator and Wine Enthusiast awards—focuses on wines made with Rhône varietals from California and abroad. Wine flights paired with local artisan cheeses are a popular light meal.

Sondra believes the dining experience should continue after your time at the restaurant. She wants her guests to be able to take home a tangible piece of the girl & the fig and something to remember their visit to wine country. December 2011 brought the release of Sondra's celebration of Sonoma's bounty—*Plats du Jour*—a coffee-table style book featuring full page color photos and intimate stories of local food purveyors along with over 100 recipes, as a follow-up to *the girl & the fig Cookbook*, published in 2004 by Simon & Schuster. The other way to extend the “fig experience” is with the “FIGfood” product line, which includes jam, chutney, compote, vinegar, vinaigrette and herb blends that are sold nationwide. These are all natural, artisan-produced gourmet food products available in the restaurants, at www.thegirlandthefig.com and in stores across the country.

Sondra sets the tone at her restaurants—just the right balance of quirky and elegant—to create a casual yet very singular dining experience. And the impeccable attention to the flavor and freshness of the cuisine, as well as your service, culminate in a memory that will linger long after the meal itself.

Sondra Bernstein – Proprietor

One sure thing that can be said about Sondra Bernstein is that, as a true Restaurateur, her restaurants are a real expression of her personality. Many of the guests who frequent Sondra's establishments feel as if she is a friend of theirs, which is understandable given her close attention to ensuring that their experience is distinctive and memorable. Her passion for the hospitality business is her driving force and continues to inspire her to create and recreate. Sondra is the Proprietor of the girl & the fig and ESTATE in Sonoma & the fig café & winebar in Glen Ellen. She is also the author of the *the girl & the fig Cookbook* published in 2004 by Simon & Schuster and her newest book, *Plats du Jour: the girl & the fig's Journey Through the Seasons in Wine Country*, which was called "enchanting by NBC TV in their 2011 holiday round-up of cookbooks. Her gourmet food product line is available nationwide under the girl & the fig label.



Sondra Bernstein's acclaimed Sonoma restaurants have been cited by food lovers and national media as iconic wine country destinations. the girl & the fig and the fig café and winebar offer country food with a French passion and ESTATE is their Italian sister, serving Rustic Italian fare with a California point of view. All three restaurants are ingredient driven and in 2012 The Huffington Post observed, "Sondra Bernstein's restaurants have focused on seasonality since 1997." Her commitment is enhanced by an award-winning in-house salumi program, hand made pastas, the FIGfood line of gourmet food products and their 2+ acre biodynamic farm that supplies the restaurants. In 2012, Sondra was celebrated "Person of the Year," by the Hospice du Rhone, an international vintners association at their 20th anniversary event for her commitment to promoting Rhone wines. the girl & the fig was the first restaurants to offer a "Rhone-Alone" wine list in 1997, introducing patrons to new varietals and expanding their palettes. Along with her partner Executive Chef John Toulze, Sondra has created the only restaurants in the California Wine Country that offer you the California version of Wine Country cuisine from both Italy and France--two wine country regions whose micro climates match that of Sonoma.

Her short story ... D.C. born, Philadelphia bred, BFA from Philadelphia College of Art (photography), TGI Friday's Trainer & Team Leader for their national restaurant openings, graduate of The Restaurant School (culinary & restaurant management), Operations Manager for several restaurants in Philadelphia (The Fish Market & Marabella's) and Los Angeles (Alice's Restaurant & Tavern on Main), and Director of Operations for Viansa Winery in Sonoma County.

The long story ... Sondra has spent over twenty years dedicated to the hospitality business. With a passion for food and wine, the trip from Philadelphia to Sonoma County was inevitable. Having restaurants in Sonoma County is a tribute to the efforts of the farmers, ranchers, cheese makers and, of course, grape growers & vintners in this bountiful landscape.

The restaurants themselves are mixed media collages that incorporate all of the five senses. Her philosophy is that "dining is as follows; "dining is an analogy to theatre". First of all, you need to start with the real thing (in theatre = raw talent) (in dining = raw product). Then it takes a lot of practice before the curtain goes up. The passion, the intensity, the teamwork, and the integrity all drive the work to a climax (guest satisfaction & personal accomplishment).

On the surface the collage of the senses appears as:

Sight encompasses the physical space as well as the finished plate
Smell, obvious as it may be, is necessary to enhance the other senses
Sound would inevitably be our choice of music
Touch would be on two levels, the textures of the food & wines, as well as the emotional touch
(memories & feelings) that the experience can bring
Taste is the one that keeps them coming back for more

Below the surface, you will find lots of subtle nuances & details that round out the dining experience. To put all of these elements together requires hard work & dedication. Sondra has surrounded herself with very talented and passionate people that share the philosophy that life is a work in progress. Important philosophies that run through the restaurants are the usage of the local products when available, a focus on wine education with the guests and staff through variety and tasting, and allowing the staff to contribute on whatever level they are inspired to do so. Sondra has created restaurants that she believes in, that she enjoys working in and that make people happy. And the food is really good too!