



John Toulze – Managing Partner and Executive Chef

John Toulze is a native of Northern California from a third generation French family. Cooking was, and continues to be, a strong passion in his family life. John started his career in hospitality at Viansa Winery in Sonoma in 1994. After several years of cooking and wine sales, John left Viansa winery to help Sondra Bernstein open the girl & the fig restaurant in Glen Ellen. At the girl & the fig, John's role was varied as he divided his work between the sous chef and floor manager. During the second year of business, John took over the kitchen as the Chef de Cuisine and continued to define the restaurant's "country food with a French passion" focus.

Twenty years later, John is not only the Executive Chef but also the Managing Partner. John has been critical to the opening of the original restaurants and every project that followed. He has also had an important role in developing the girl & the fig's FIG FOOD product line and has developed the recipes for both the girl & the fig Cookbooks. The restaurant's' farm to table experience eventually grew from herb gardens at the restaurant to working an organically farmed culinary garden also under John's care. John believes his immersion in "the farm project," as they call it, has taught him to be a better chef, giving him an intimate understanding of what seasonality really means.

Though no longer running ESTATE, an Italian-theme restaurant in the historic property known as "The General's Daughter," through this foray into Italian cooking John discovered a passion for creating salumi. He mastered the artisanal art of curing meats and continues to teach our other chefs so they can keep up with the production. Under the brand MANO FORMATE, bacon, pancetta, prosciutto, guanciale, lonzo and salami are just a few products produced in-house.

John received a Rising Star Chef award in June 2009.

John is a completely self-taught chef and enjoys developing new recipes, training new staff, but, most of all, understands the importance of consistency and endurance. "Food is my passion, I have been blessed to cook in the wine country where the commitment and dedication to exceptional products is of the highest importance. I am one of the lucky ones, I am able to pursue my passion and make my dreams become reality."