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Q & A with Evan and Sarah Rich of the JBF Award-Nominated Rich Table

by Elena North-Kelly on April 22, 2013



When Evan and Sarah Rich opened the doors at San Francisco's **Rich Table**, they presented a refined sensibility gleaned from combined backgrounds at high-end restaurants like Bouley, Quince, and Michael Mina with a convivial, relaxed environment. We caught up with the husband-and-wife team behind the Best New Restaurant nominee to learn about the inspiration behind their concept, their favorite cookbooks, and the unusual recipe that launched a culinary career.

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JBF: What is your favorite item on the menu at Rich Table right now?

Evan Rich: Asparagus with pork belly and sorrel. I love this dish because it really represents what we do here. At first glance, it seems very simple but there's a lot of complexity of flavor and texture—and a great deal of work that goes into both the preparation and the pickup of the dish. It was inspired by sweet-and-sour pork.

Sarah Rich: Spaghetti with seaweed, pancetta, and sunflower seeds. It's not a flavor combination that I've seen before or even something that you might think would work together. But it's actually completely harmonious and satisfying; it's complex yet simple, and shockingly delicious.

JBF: We read that Rich Table's philosophy is rooted in a comfortable, convivial atmosphere that evokes memories of family gatherings. Can you tell us more about the inspiration for your concept?

ER: At the core of it all, we just wanted to create an environment where we would feel comfortable dining with friends and family.

SR: Yes, exactly. We really just tried to create a space and menu that reflects what makes us excited, comfortable, and happy about being in a restaurant.

JBF: Can you tell us about a great restaurant meal you've had in the past year?

ER: We had the opportunity to go to Singapore recently, and ate at a great place called **Esquina**. It wasn't something we expected in Singapore, but the space had a lot of character and the food was sophisticated—and with a simplicity that we appreciated.

SR: We went to the **Restaurant at Meadowood** in the Napa Valley and the entire experience was incredible. It was a real escape, which was nice after eight months of grinding to get our restaurant open. The property is breathtakingly beautiful and relaxing, and the food at the restaurant was incredible. It was fresh, vibrant, and really spoke of the Bay Area while bringing dining to a whole new level.

JBF: What are some of your favorite cookbooks, and why?

ER: I love the **Tartine Bread** book. I really appreciate Chad Robertson's passion for what he does. And I also love the new **L'Astrance** book, because I enjoy Pascal Barbot's perspective on simplicity, seasonality, and textures.

SR: I really like Amanda Hesser's **The Essential New York Times Cookbook**. And Craig Claiborne's **Southern Cooking** and Marcella Hazan's **Essentials of Classic Italian Cooking** have been in my library since high school.

JBF: What is your earliest food memory?

ER: My earliest food memories all involve holidays with my family. My parents are fantastic cooks and like to experiment. For Easter my mom used to make sugar snap peas with a honey-mustard dip. This dish, as simple as it is, really stands out in my memories and has inspired one of the bites on our menu right now: sugar snap peas that are cooked on the plancha and glazed with honey, mustard, and freshly grated horseradish.

SR: I can tell you about my first "cooking" memory: making dirt soup for my mom. I wanted to cook something so badly but didn't know how—so I mixed together dirt, pebbles, leaves, sticks, and water, and put it in a bowl for my poor mother to eat.

About the author: Elena North-Kelly is associate editor at the James Beard Foundation. Find her on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).



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