

## Donato Scotti

**Chef Donato's** roots in his culinary career were planted at a young age. Growing up near Lake Como in the small town of Bergamo, Italy, one of his first jobs as child was delivering bread by bicycle to local residents. Surrounded by a family of avid rural gastronomes, he grew up accustomed to a farm-to-table approach on food every day, with fresh rabbits and chickens raised by his father, and homegrown seasonal vegetables from the family garden. Thanks to his inherently epicurean home life, Donato seamlessly transitioned into working at the Michelin-starred *Ristorante Del l'Angelo* in Italy during high school, a regional destination for serious food lovers. Following, he studied at the Istituto Alberghiero di San Pellegrino culinary school, the alma mater to numerous acclaimed chefs including Luciano Pellegrini and Angelo Auriana.

Graduating at the age of 21, Donato could not resist the allure of international travel and culinary exploration, and was magnetically attracted to New York City. After working in an Italian restaurant on the southeast corner of Central Park, he decided to continue his travels westward to Los Angeles where he eagerly met the opportunity to work at the legendary *Valentino* restaurant, utilizing California's unrivaled fresh and local ingredients. Under the direction of owner Piero Selvaggio, Donato shined, moving up in the ranks during his six years there, ultimately becoming the head chef.

His instrumental experience at *Valentino* was followed by another career changing opportunity at *Il Fornaio* in Sacramento. Starting in 2000, Donato grew within the company, eventually taking positions at both their Walnut Creek and Palo Alto locations as the head chef. In 2004, Donato joined forces with his friend and business partner who admired his vision for a ristorante that combined fine food with a friendly and elegant, yet rustic, ambience. Donato designed the concept for *La Strada* in Palo Alto, and building upon his excellent reputation in the Peninsula for fine cuisine, he focused his menu primarily on the Northern Italian regions, setting the stage for future endeavors.

In 2009, Donato branched out on his own with a vision to bring the authentic flavors of Italy to Northern California against the backdrop of a beautifully-designed modern restaurant at *Donato Enoteca* in Redwood City. His success continued with *Descò* in Oakland in 2013, and *CRU* in Redwood City in 2016.

The restaurants and menus Donato creates today are reminiscent of his childhood days, filled with artisanal ingredients, seasonal California farmer's market produce and authentic Italian hospitality. His dream of opening his own restaurants with true and honest contemporary Italian cuisine have become a reality, with no sign of momentum letting up. Donato has found that his mentors are all around him, gleaned new knowledge and perspectives from each person he works with, including longtime friend and fellow Italian chef, Gianluca Guglielmi. With a shared culinary philosophy of using fresh, simple ingredients in inventive ways to highlight each region of Italy, Donato and Gianluca have partnered to open *Donato & Co.* in Berkeley.