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Woman of Power

Lehn Goetz, Co-Owner of Café Coyote and Newly Elected President of the San Diego Chapter of the California Restaurant Association

Written by Christina Buquid



The ambitious woman behind Café Coyote not only runs one of San Diego's most consistently celebrated and honored Mexican restaurants, but she has also spearheaded community efforts like the historic Old Town Community Foundation and the Business Improvement District. This past summer alone, she was honored with the highly coveted 2008 Restaurateur of the Year award by the local chapter of the California Restaurant Association, then was elected president of the esteemed organization.

Needless to say, Lehn Goetz continues to redefine what it means to be a woman in the kitchen. We wouldn't be surprised to see her battling Capitol Hill one day — her mother was California State Senator Dede Alpert, so it's in the blood. In celebration of 944's Food Issue, we couldn't be more stoked to make her this month's "Woman of Power" honoree.

944: How did you get into the restaurant industry?

LEHN GOETZ: I actually went to UCI and majored in third world studies. While going to school I started working at a restaurant and helped with the management team. All within six months, I went from helping a management team to co-owning a restaurant and being an entrepreneur. The rest is history.

What did you want to be when you were a kid?

I grew up the oldest of three girls, so I always liked to be in charge. I'd love cooking with my mom and entertaining guests, so I was constantly around food and people. I guess that's why the restaurant industry is perfect for me now; ever since I was young I loved to boss people around! Being a restaurateur, you basically have a hundred kinds of jobs in one market so you just have to be on top of things.

Who is the most inspiring woman in your life?

I'd have to say it's a tie between my mom and grandma. My mom was a stay-at-home mother who ended up becoming a senator later on in life, and her perseverance has always been inspirational. My grandma was the most amazing cook and guest entertainer, so you can say her talents have guided me in my actual field of work.

What do you think is the hardest thing for women growing up today?

Women growing up today are really lucky with so many more career paths. We're definitely not as limited as our predecessors, so young women must realize they can be anything they want with persistence.

What music do you have blasting on your iPod?

Leona Lewis! I just can't get enough of that "Bleeding Love" song.

What is your most irrational fear?

This is going to sound really strange, but I'm deathly afraid of being alone. I always need to be around people, and I guess that's why the restaurant life is perfect.

Now that you've conquered the San Diego restaurant world, what's your next ambition?

My life has been this restaurant, so I'd love to continue with the growth and success of Café Coyote. Personally, I'd love to live in another country, perhaps Italy or Switzerland. I love culture and food, so it's always been my dream to live in Europe.

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