

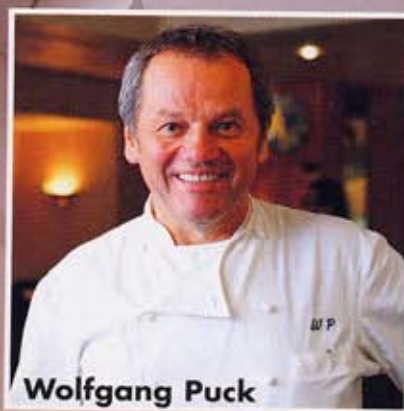
Clash of the Restaurant Titans

Spichal invades Puck's home turf

By Sharon Boorstin & Annie Suh



Joachim Spichal



Wolfgang Puck

Spichal's new Paperfish restaurant in Beverly Hills



Puck's Spago

Yes, foodies used to notice that L.A.'s two most famous chefs and busiest catering-company honchos, Wolfgang Puck and Joachim Splichal, split the town. Splichal kept his Patina Group restaurants—Patina, Nick & Stef's, Café Pino, etc.—east of La Brea, while Puck kept his—Spago, Cut, Chinois, etc.—on the west side. Apparently all unspoken territorial restrictions were obliterated when Puck opened his Wolfgang Puck L.A. Bistro downtown nearly two years ago, a stone's throw from the Patina Group's offices. Now Splichal's Paperfish is making a splash in Beverly Hills—the Inland Sea of Wolfgang Puck, whose flagship restaurant Spago is only a three-minute drive from Paperfish.

Spago Beverly Hills opened in 1997, and from day one stars have been flocking to this upscale eatery that skillfully fuses Californian, French and Asian food. The fusion creates a gratifying taste that, combined with a beautiful interior, brings celebrities and civilians back countless times. But after neighboring Paperfish opened a few months ago, perhaps Spago will need to share some of its clientele.

Over 2,500 people work nearby in film and TV production companies such as Rob Reiner's and Oprah's, and Internet giants MySpace and AOL-Time Warner. Which was why, when Tishman Speyer, the building's owner, came to

Splichal with a request to open here, Joachim Splichal didn't resist—even though Beverly Hills was known as “Wolfgang Puck territory.”

Paperfish is the posh new eatery in the old Maple Drive restaurant space, where stockbrokers are only some of the regulars that have made it their local haunt. Walk into Paperfish at 1:05 p.m. on a weekday and you'll find the eye-popping-orange banquette in the lounge wall-to-wall with Wall Street traders. After the stock market closes at 1 p.m. (PST), they hustle over from the nearby Morgan Stanley office.

Splichal serves French bistro food at his Pinot Restaurants, steak at his Nick & Stef's and haute California-French cuisine at his flagship restaurant Patina. But Paperfish, named for a rare tropical fish as well as for the French style of baking fish wrapped in parchment paper (*en papillote*), is Splichal's first foray into seafood and Beverly Hills and Puck *terroir*.

On the other side, Puck also serves similar styles—California-French cuisine at his Chinois restaurants and steak at his fabulously successful Cut restaurant at the Beverly Wilshire, which opened in 2006. Since its opening, Cut has received praise from big media outlets including the *Wall Street Journal* and *Wine Spectator*. In 2007 Cut was

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nominated for "Best New Restaurant" by the James Beard Foundation, one of the highest marks within the culinary community. After the opening of Paperfish, will Splichal accept the challenge to take on Cut?

From downtown to Beverly Hills, to Las Vegas to New Jersey, Puck and Splichal have opened one restaurant after another, as if each were waiting and watching to see who is opening where, then following suit. When Puck's Chinois launched in Las Vegas in 1998 inside the Forum Shops at Caesars, Splichal's Patina Group opened Pinot Brasserie at The Venetian Resort Hotel Casino in 1999. Then in 2006, Puck opened Postrio at The Venetian, followed by his Wolfgang Puck Bar & Grill at the MGM Grand in 2004.

But wait, it doesn't stop there. Patina Group has 13 locations in New York and only one in New Jersey, which may be a reason why Puck decided to break into his first east coast venture in New Jersey with his Wolfgang Puck American Grille in 2006.

With both Puck and Splichal establishing more than 15 successful restaurants each, including some in Las Vegas and the East Coast, they have both won high awards and have been admired by other top chefs. Matsuhisa's chef Nobu Matsuhisa names Wolfgang Puck and Joachim Splichal as favorites. Jean Pierre Lemanissier picks Splichal at Patina saying, "He's very creative and you can tell he has a true love for his profession," while Valentino's Piero Selvaggio picks Puck at Spago stating, "He is simply the best."

Puck and Splichal have received top-chef status, setting them up as a challenge to each other even though no spoken competition exists. But with both holding amazing talent and business acumen, crossing home turfs was bound to happen. As the proverb goes: competition is the whetstone of talent. And it doesn't hurt patrons to experience what peak talent creates. 🌿



The Patina Group:

Downtown LA - Patina, Café Pinot, Kendall's, Brasserie and Bar, Nick & Stef's Steakhouse, Patinette, Market Café, Zucca Ristorante

Greater LA - eat. on sunset, lounge. on sunset, Paperfish, Pentimento at LACMA

Orange County - Leatherby's Café Rouge, Pinot Provence, Tangeta, Market Café, Catal Restaurant and Uva Bar

Northern California - Julia's Kitchen at Copia

New York - Beer Bar, Brasserie, Brasserie 8 1/2, Café Centro, Cucina & Co., Naples 45,

Nick & Stef's Steakhouse, Rock Center Café, The Grand Tier Restaurant, The Sea Grill

New Jersey - Panevino Ristorante

Wolfgang Puck restaurants:

Maui - Spago

Colorado - Spago

Santa Monica - Chinois

Beverly Hills - Cut, Spago

Washington D.C. - The Source

New Jersey - Wolfgang Puck American Grille

Las Vegas - Wolfgang Puck

Bar & Grill, Trattoria del

Lupo, Postrio, Chinois, Spago

Michigan - Wolfgang Puck Grill

Minnesota - 2021

Indiana - Puck's

West Hollywood - Red | Seven