

MISHEL LEDOUX

GENERAL MANAGER,
BALTAIRE, LOS ANGELES, CA

by Albert Letizia and Rachel Macalisang

PHOTO COURTESY OF BALTAIRE



Mishel LeDoux has been the General Manager for celebrity chefs in Beverly Hills for over a decade. After a long stay at CUT by Wolfgang Puck and a turn at The Bazaar by José Andrés, Mishel now runs the hot-spot Baltaire in L.A.'s Brentwood neighborhood.

Baltaire is an all-Prime-beef steakhouse, with global influences and a seasonally inspired menu and a kitchen headed up by Chef Travis Strickland. Although Chef Strickland is new to Los Angeles, LeDoux insists her principals of hospitality are still the same, famous chef or not. "When a celebrity chef walks into the dining room, obviously it's fun and everyone is excited. But with Chef Strickland, I'm constantly going back to the kitchen to tell him who is in the restaurant, or I'll bring guests back to the kitchen to make that introduction so Travis feels more and more comfortable going out into the dining room. That's a big part of my plan for hospitality, to create that familiarity."

LeDoux's long tenure in Beverly Hills has definitely taught her how to care for VIP clientele and create returning customers. She understands that in any restaurant, guest recognition is the key. "The guest just wants to be recognized. They just want to feel special when they walk in a place and, in a way, it's almost as simple as that!" She adds, "Wolfgang is a master at making people happy and I feel I've brought a lot of those lessons with me."

LeDoux says she's adjusting well to the laid back vibe of the West Side. Although a lot of the faces are the same from Beverly Hills to Brentwood, there's a certain element of "chill" at Baltaire that she enjoys. "The clientele is very similar. A lot of them work in Beverly Hills and live in Brentwood. And when they're here, they're a little more laid back and 'at home.' That's just the general feeling of the West Side."

And that "at home" vibe LeDoux tries to foster is pervasive throughout the front of the house. "When the staff sees one of our regulars or VIP guests come in and give me a hug, they see that history we have. And, in a way, it makes them understand what I'm trying to create. It makes them say, 'Wow, we do have an amazing clientele and we do have a beautiful restaurant' and it inspires them."

Above all, she tries to instill in her staff the idea that they are all in the business of "making memories." She reminds her servers that Baltaire is a special-occasion spot for many guests and that they, as servers, need to bring the energy and enthusiasm necessary to create memorable moments. "In many cases, dinner at Baltaire is someone's birthday or anniversary or first date, and we're the caretakers of that occasion—so we have to make these moments memorable for the guest." ■■

THE "5" LIST

MISHEL LEDOUX'S TOP FIVE FAVORITES:

The perfect glass of Montrachet.

Working in a beautifully designed restaurant.

A truly memorable dining experience.

Making guests feel at home and cared for.

Surrounding myself with the right team to grow the business.

MISHEL LEDOUX'S TOP FIVE PEEVES:

Inconsistent and neglectful service.

Bad music that doesn't fit the ambiance.

Bright lighting that doesn't add to the vibe of the room.

An "uninteresting" wine list.

Guests that are really mad that they have to wait a few minutes for an 8:00 p.m. reservation on a Saturday night!