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item

SUMMER GUIDE

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CHEF CHAT

Josef Centeno

KEEPS THE KITCHEN COOKING
AT MESON G

STORY BY LAYLA REVIS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DOMINIC DISAIA

A glamorous Hollywood boîte reminiscent of Fitzgerald's swanky heyday and NY's Upper East Side, Meson G's orange banquettes, succulent wreaths, rich mahogany accents and a heavy marble counter with views into the bustling kitchen make Josef Centeno a very happy chef. Needless to say, those in Tinseltown aren't surprised FOX has targeted the well-polished spot for Darren Star's new pilot, *Kitchen Confidential*. *ITEM* caught up with Centeno to ask him a bit about his own cravings.

Q: Where do you like to dine?

A: Ever since I moved to L.A., I work six or seven days a week so I don't get out much. I love El Carmen — they have great tacos and great margaritas. I also love the small Thai restaurants and Korean barbecues around town.

Q: Any kitchen faux pas?

A: I hate it when cooks put pots on your cutting board. To me, it's the highest disrespect. You'll see chefs put their pots on their cutting boards where they slice meat. It's just dirty. I'm pretty quiet for the most part, but I'll get upset if I ever see that happen.

Q: What dish is driving you these days?

A: Yellowtail sashimi with bacon. I stumbled upon the combination while working with blue fin tuna heads. I'd lightly sear the muscle meat around the eyes and the cheek — one of the most amazing parts of the fish — then I'd top it with an anchovy garlic sauce. With that dish, I started playing with bacon. That's how the yellowtail sashimi with bacon dish evolved.

Q: What are the staples in your fridge at home?

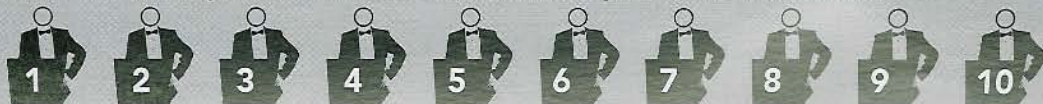
A: Sadly, my fridge at home is empty. I live at the restaurant. I don't remember the last time I went grocery shopping, but when I do, I never leave without shallots and chives.



Morton's West Hollywood

At Morton's in West Hollywood, the food may be hot but it's the guest list that sizzles. The Hollywood hotspot has secured its title as the IT place to be on Oscar night for the *Vanity Fair* party, but any night of the year, everyone from **Tom Cruise** to **J. Lo** to Hollywood's most powerful producers can be seen flocking to Morton's for a good time and some classic American fare. Hint: Go on Mondays — that's when the scene is especially alive. Morton's West Hollywood, 8764 Melrose Ave., West Hollywood, CA, 310.276.1253

TRENDY TABLE



RATING