

*David Bernahl*  
A Profile by Tony Seton

David Bernahl grew up in the Chicago area. His parents divorced when he was young, and his mother taught him a great deal about grace, in appearance and behavior. Those lessons have served him well all of his now 34 years. He has taken what he learned – and probably a great deal that was intrinsic – and has become a serious entrepreneur, first in haberdashery and then in the culinary arts.

David is a co-founder and partner in Coastal Luxury Management, the people behind the Pebble Beach Food and Wine, Cannery Row Brewing Company, Restaurant 1833, Los Angeles Food and Wine Festival, and a growing list of catering operations, social clubs, and restaurants.

He has more on his plate than sheer ambition or professional gluttony would invite, but what fills it are projects and ideas that engage him with a ring of quality and a sense of purpose. He is very busy with them, but he also has quality time for his wife and four-year-old daughter. Does he watch television, read books? Yes both, but not for entertainment. He is always learning, about some new aspect of his work, or other interest, like digital photography.

He invests himself in what he is doing; his energy follows his attention. It was a trait learned early on, perhaps more of a spiritual practice than a work ethic. He does what he loves, and he loves doing it.

David spends a lot of time in Los Angeles. “Downtown Los Angeles is exploding right now. We started to see that obviously after we started producing the Los Angeles Food and Wine festival – we just celebrated our third – and we had the largest street closure in downtown LA history. We shut down Grand Avenue for seven days in front of the Walt Disney Concert Hall.” The festival attracted more than 15,000 people this year; the Pebble Beach event drew more than 8,000.

“To be in the heart of art in LA where the Walt Disney Concert Hall is and the music center, Dorothy Chandler, Grand Park, things that are iconic Los Angeles. That fits really well with what Food and Wine is all about. It’s a little deeper meaning, not just a shallow brush stroke; it’s lie a richer slice of the city, a richer partnership. We had the LA Opera do a pop-up right there on stage right before Questlove from the Roots deejayed the rest of the night in classic hip-hop, cool things that are so culturally Los Angeles.”

That historic explosion of the central city – “LA is probably the hottest, fastest growing city in the United States right now” – has prompted David and his associates to open “a very exciting restaurant, designed by AvroKo out of New York” called Faith and Flower this winter. “So obviously we’re very committed to LA long term and spend



half our time there anyway. It was a natural to do something on year-round basis.”

“We’re partners on a big project in Las Vegas that opens December 30<sup>th</sup> at The Cosmopolitan. It’s the rebirth of the social club called Rose.Rabbit.Lie. Kind of like the Copacabana of yesteryear; we want to bring social magic back in a modern and relevant way.

“It’s really taking all these elements and looking at them through a lens of quality for Las Vegas. Las Vegas has done a really good job of creating all these big spectacles and shiny things and overly themed products but what Vegas was built on was this maitre d’-driven city. You’d walk into the casino and they would be like, ‘Oh Mr. Seton, it’s so good to have you back.’ Get him his martini, two olives; he likes blue cheese in them’. It was so personal. There’s an opportunity to create products for what The Cosmopolitan calls the ‘curious class,’ for individuals not searching for the big, shiny thing but for quality and intellectual stimulation.”

David is also looking at opportunities on The Peninsula. “We do things that we believe in and so that allows us, I think, a different kind of wealth, a different kind of success every day. It’s a feeling. It’s a lifestyle, it’s a feeling that you’re building something that you really believe in, and all of our projects have done really significant, positive things for the community.” His enterprises have contributed millions to local charities.

There’s a glint in his eyes when he recalls some of what he’s done. “Start with just a whisper, an idea. They’re barely alive in the crux of your hands and you look at them and you try to breathe life into them. The struggles that it takes to get them to become a thriving, business entity. Then you can step back and look at this thing that has its own personality, its own culture and it employs hundreds of people. That is a very rewarding process to being an entrepreneur.”

It’s a lot of work. “It happens sometimes, when you wake up and ask yourself, “Where am I right now? Oh yeah, I can see the Bellagio out of the window. That’s right; we’re in Vegas. Yes, it’s a serious travel schedule. Balance is important because success is not just measured by business products, projects, or money at all. I make sure that I’m home to be with my daughter and we have weekends together almost always.”

David and his family live in Carmel Valley. “This’ll be our home forever.”