

MICHEL NISCHAN

Owner

Growing up on a farm instilled in Michel Nischan a deep appreciation for sustainable agriculture and those who work the land that has never left him. Nischan is Chef/Owner of Dressing Room: A Homegrown Restaurant, located on the grounds of the Westport Country Playhouse, and President of Wholesome Wave Foundation Charitable Ventures, a non-profit organization focused on making locally grown, organic and sustainable foods available to all. starts a new chapter in his ongoing story about the love of food and the people who produce it.

Nischan, a renowned chef and best-selling author, came to know Paul Newman's daughter, Nell Newman, through his advocacy for a more healthful, organic and sustainable food future. Nell, the driving force behind Newman's Own Organics®, introduced Michel to Mr. Newman when she learned of her father's plans to become involved in a restaurant. Paul and Michel found their beliefs on food, family and community to be remarkably aligned, and Dressing Room evolved as the place where their shared values could have a common home and expression.

In keeping with their belief that America needs to rediscover the neighborly sense of community that once helped Main Street America thrive, Wholesome Wave was formed with funding from Newman's Own Foundation and the Betsy and Jesse Fink Foundation. Wholesome Wave and Dressing Room work in tandem to create grass-roots initiatives that celebrate the local food systems and recipes that once endeared America to the rest of the world. "We were well loved for our home-fried chicken, apple pie and pot roast long before we became the land of golden arches and fast food drive-throughs," says Nischan. Wholesome Wave funds and manages four active farmers markets, is working with local public schools to develop a sustainable food curriculum program called *Sustainable Mentorship*, and has created and manages a value-added farm-to-college program called *Green Wave*. Newman and Nischan appeared on "ABC World News with Charles Gibson (November 24, 2006)" and "NBC News Nightline with , named "Persons of the Week" for their community outreach efforts with Dressing Room and Wholesome Wave.

Michel is credited with creating a cuisine of well-being, focused on a respect for pure, local, organic ingredients and their intense flavors – without the use of highly processed, overly indulgent ingredients. The inspiration to explore cooking for well-being came in 1994 when his five-year-old son Chris was diagnosed with juvenile diabetes. "Chris's illness made me realize that floating on foie gras, bathing in cream, and dusting in processed flour might not be in my customers' –best interest", says Michel. He introduced his groundbreaking new cuisine at Heartbeat restaurant at the W Hotel, midtown Manhattan in 1997, and was immediately propelled to the forefront of New York's culinary scene. Since then, he has continued to raise the bar for delicious and healthful cooking and is continually lauded for his dedication to organics, sustainability and cultural food preservation.

After years of focusing on healthful, sustainable and culturally significant cooking causes, Michel decided to put his methods in action and print as a contributing editor for Food Arts Magazine, a former board member for Chef's Collaborative, and by writing two well-received cookbooks, *Homegrown Pure and Simple: Great Healthy Food from Garden to Table* (Chronicle Books, 2005) and *Taste Pure and Simple: Irresistible Recipes for Good Food and Good Health* (Chronicle Books, 2003). *Taste* was listed as a bestseller in *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, and won a 2004 James Beard Foundation Cookbook Award (award winners are selected by industry peers, and more than 600 culinary professionals are involved in the voting process).

Michel resides in Fairfield, Connecticut with his wife, Lori, and their five children.