



Vanessa Lauren and Nick Sephir's dish of Patagonian mussels sautéed in a Thai coconut green chile sauce with edible flowers.



# Mussels Beach

**PATAGONIAN MUSSELS** MAKE A SPLASHING DEBUT ON THE WEST COAST

by Jesse Hom-Dawson

**WHEN WE THINK OF PATAGONIA**, a region shared by Chile and Argentina at the foot of South America, we often think of Chilean sea bass, otherwise known as Patagonian toothfish. However, it's not just the popular flaky white fish that resides in Patagonia's neighboring oceans; they are also home to the Patagonian mussel, a mollusk prized for its flavor and texture. Cultivated in the waters of the South Pacific, which are full of nitrates and phosphates, fed by icy currents from Antarctica, the mussels are kept in a pollution-free ecosystem that is considered one of the cleanest in the world. There are more than 850 breeding centers throughout the inland seas that flourish in a completely natural environment, with nearby processing plants each going through more than 160 tons of fresh mussels a day. It's a large and burgeoning industry that Patagonia is eager to share with the rest of the world.

Whether steamed, boiled or sautéed, the mussel—rich in proteins and omega-3 fatty acids—is an easy sell to health-conscious consumers who also enjoy high-quality food products. The mussels are now imported to the U.S. in four formats: shell-less meat, half-shell, whole and preserved in a can. It allows the mussels to be prepared in a variety of ways and encourages creativity on the part of chefs.

In the spirit of this creativity, Patagonia Mussels paired with online chef community Chef's Roll to host an event at seafood restaurant Herringbone in Santa Monica, California, to promote Patagonian mussels on the West Coast. Chefs from all over Los Angeles were invited to learn more about Patagonian mussels, and were provided innumerable ingredients to create dishes with the mussels.

Los Angeles-based Chef Vanessa Lauren, formerly of Ludo Lefebvre's Trois Mec and Petit Trois and who now runs local sustainable pop-up dinners, was one of the chefs in attendance at the event. "I got involved through Chef's Roll, and it was really great because we got to learn about the product as well as the history of Patagonia. Then we all broke off into groups to cook with the mussels," says Lauren. Lauren and her partner Nick Sephir made a vibrant dish of Patagonia mussels sautéed in a Thai coconut green chile sauce, topped with edible flowers. Lauren adds, "As an event chef, I don't typically use seafood because of the hassle of cleaning it, so I really appreciate that they are already prepped and cooked. I find they're great to use in a cooked dish like a bouillabaisse, and their big size and bright colors make a really nice presentation on the plate. I have a seafood dinner coming up, and I will definitely be using them again!" ■ **cr**



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A bounty of produce and the beautiful open kitchen of Herringbone in Santa Monica was open for the chefs to come up with creative dishes using Patagonia mussels.

Event chef Vanessa Lauren hosts sustainable pop-up dinners throughout Los Angeles.

