

LOS ANGELES

HAUTE LIVING

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MOZZA BY THE SEA

JAMES BEARD WINNER NANCY SILVERTON ON SERVING UP HER HAUTE ITALIAN CUISINE ON THE MEXICAN RIVIERA.

BY LAURA SCHREFFLER

MEXICO IS HAVING A RENAISSANCE. THE WORLD'S TOP CHEFS ARE clamoring to serve up their freshest fare across the border, and now that haute list includes Nancy Silverton, the co-owner of Pizzeria Mozza, Osteria Mozza, Mozza2Go, chi SPACCA and Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel newbie the Barish. Silverton, who received the James Beard Foundation's highest honor for Outstanding Chef in 2014 and has authored eight cookbooks, is bringing Mozza to the Marina Village at Costa Palmas, a 1,000-acre beachfront resort community on the Baja Peninsula. The community is also home to the Four Seasons Resort Los Cabos at Costa Palmas, Amanvavi, a Robert Trent Jones II 18-hole golf course, 18 acres of orchards and its own private beach and yacht club.

Silverton's Mexican outpost, slated for a fall opening, will be the perfect blend of Osteria Mozza, Pizza Mozza and chi SPACCA, all with East Cape flair, featuring the incredible seafood, produce and provisions of the area. The menu will change and the crowd may change, but the energy will always be there around the handmade wood-fired pizza oven and the world-class marina view. We chatted with the award-winning chef about her *muy caliente* new venture.

Haute Living: First off, why do you think Mexico has become such a hot spot for California-based chefs as of late?

Nancy Silverton: It's almost like there's been this hidden gem in our backyard and we are finally — and suddenly — realizing, "Hey, that thing we thought was just a rock in the yard is actually a diamond!"

HL: What challenges and excitement do you personally find there?

NS: I am finding the challenges are similar to when I opened Mozza in Los Angeles. Finding the right people for the kitchen and the front of the house; finding the best, most reliable suppliers; finding the clientele that responds enthusiastically to what we've created. The excitement comes when you've accomplished those very things.

HL: Why was Costa Palmas the perfect partner to launch your first Mexican outpost?

NS: It's beautiful setting, and though it is so close to home, it seems so

very far away. On top of that, I feel — at least I hope — that Mozza Costa Palmas will be a special dining experience for locals and travelers alike.

HL: How will it offer the fare diners have come to expect while still playing up to its environment? What new menu items are you looking forward to showing off?

NS: "Mozza by the Sea." That sounds quite tempting to me, even. I like to think that people have very high expectations of Mozza. I want them to. We will have many of our classic dishes, even though that word, *classic*, makes us sound 100 years old. Let's say we will have many favorites, and with the bounty of the Sea of Cortez and the land, I'm sure we will create new ones.

HL: Are there any off-menu items discerning guests should ask about?

NS: Pizzeria Mozza has been open nearly 15 years, and I think there's only one off-the-menu item: the Michael pizza. Maybe we'll have the Miguel pizza in Baja.

HL: Though Mozza is Italian, will you have a tequila/Mezcal-based spirits offering? Will you be including Mexican wines? Any special cocktails?

NS: The wine menu is still a work in progress, but the wine list will be 50 percent Italian wines and 50 percent Mexican wines.

HL: What do you hope that Mozza will contribute to the Marina Village overall?

NS: Our hope is for Mozza to be the social hub for the Marina Village — the ideal place to return after a day out, where families, couples and friends can gather over a delicious meal. The restaurant anchors the Village and features an evolving menu. It will very quickly become the "it spot" to be at Costa Palmas, where both members and guests socialize from day to night.

HL: What to you is the greatest luxury in life?

NS: Family and friends. And a good table. And some nice sheets and pillows. ■