

NOW & THEN

CELEB CHEFS

Wolfgang Puck and Mario Batali share a love of Italian food, good footwear—and, of course, the spotlight **PHOTOGRAPHS BY NIGEL PARRY**

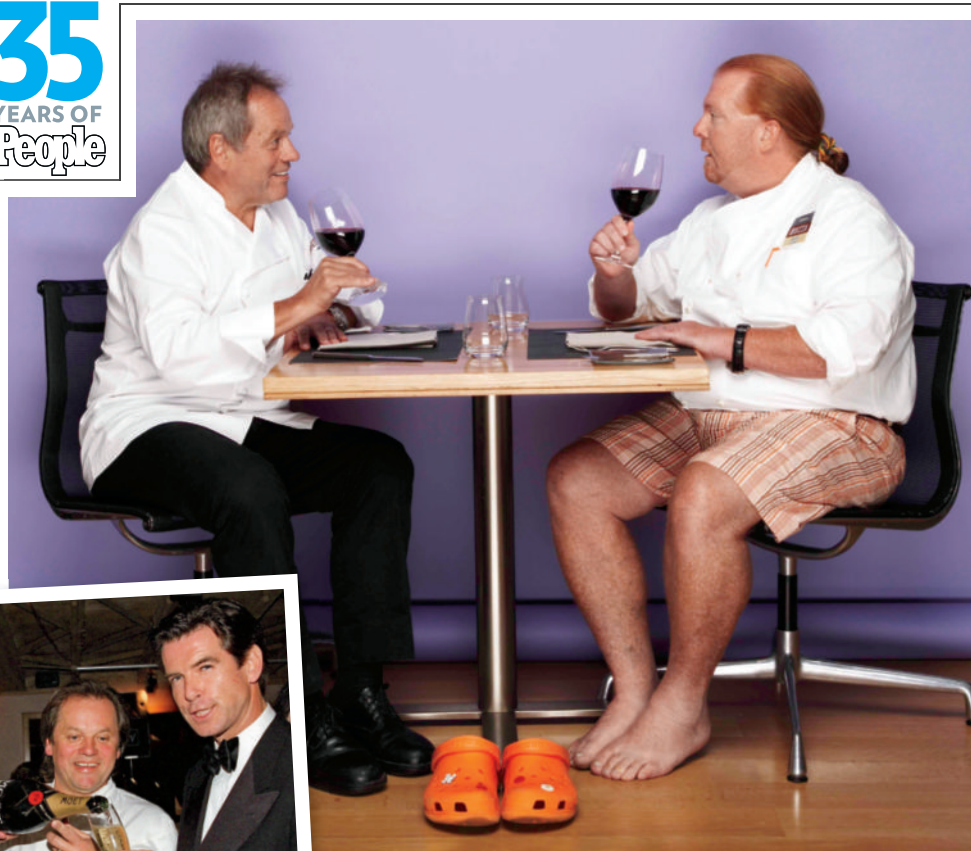


**WOLFGANG
PUCK**

Age: 60. Founded Hollywood hot spot Spago in 1982; official caterer for the Academy Awards.

MARIO BATALI

Age: 49. Owns 13 restaurants and starred on the Food Network's *Molto Mario* and on *Iron Chef America*.



1996

Is it better to be a chef today than it was 35 years ago?

PUCK: I remember when I first came to L.A., I went out one night to a club, and I danced with this girl. She asked, “What do you do?” I said, “I’m a cook.” She said, “A cook?” And when the song was over she left.

BATALI: Back then, cooking was the last thing you did after you got out of the Army—and before you went to jail! It was not an honorable profession. **Wolfgang, how’d you come up with gourmet pizza?**

PUCK: One night at Spago, we had no more bread, and a customer complained. He wanted to know what

he’d eat his smoked salmon with. So I cooked a little pizza with olive oil and onion on top, and then I said, “It’d be nice with a little caviar on top. It has more color.”

BATALI: I first ate at Spago after I came to L.A. in 1984. At that point, I was thinking about doing Italian food. And Wolfgang did a great job with pizza, a great job with pasta. He made me think about what I could do with that—I went to Italy and came back with my own take on it.

So, Mario: Are you ever going to give up wearing orange Crocs?

BATALI: My wife gave them to me, and I liked them. At this point, my kids wear orange clothes 80 percent of the time. It’s a happy color.

PUCK: I used to wear clogs all the time. They’re very

common in a European kitchen because they’re supposed to be better for your feet.

BATALI: You’re on your feet 18 hours a day!

PUCK: I have my 14-year-old son working with me in the restaurant, and after five hours, he says, “Dad, my legs hurt. How do you do it?” I said, “What? Wait until you do it for 12 hours!” He said, “No—I can’t do it.”

Is there anything left for you to accomplish?

PUCK: I would really like to make the perfect roasted chicken, where the skin is crispy, like a duck.

BATALI: I’d love to do a fast-food pasta restaurant, where you do, like, 400 portions of pasta at lunch. But I haven’t figured it out yet! ●



**35 YEARS OF...
FOOD
TRENDS**

1974

SUSHI

In the '70s, the California roll became popular lunch fare in L.A., and the rest of the country soon followed.



1983

**CHICKEN
McNUGGETS**

McDonald’s introduced the bite-size meal after a failed attempt at deep-fried Onion Nuggets.

1986

MICROWAVES

Once a luxury—early models cost up to \$3,000!—by 1986 they were in 25 percent of U.S. homes.

1991

BOTTLED WATER

In the early '90s, Americans turned to bottled water, drinking 8.7 billion gallons by 2008.

1996

STARBUCKS

“Venti Macchiato” was well on its way to replacing the “cup of Joe.”



1999

ORGANIC FOOD

In 1999 Restaurant Nora in Washington, D.C., became America’s first certified organic restaurant.

2006

RACHAEL RAY

Raised among foodies, the cook popularized the 30-Minute Meal.

INSET: BERLINER STUDIO/BRIMAGES; FOOD TRENDS (FROM TOP): MARK THOMAS; COURTESY STARBUCKS; FOOD NETWORK/AP