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The Strand House serves it up fresh in Manhattan

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Posted: Wednesday, October 1, 2014 10:15 am | Updated: 10:59 am, Wed Oct 1, 2014.

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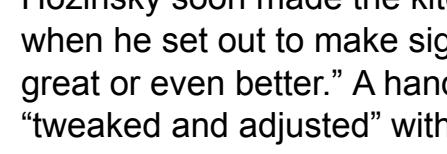
Executive chef Greg Hozinsky believes the lifeblood of great food is using the freshest ingredients. To support his theory, The Strand House in Manhattan Beach not only has its own rooftop garden, but Hozinsky journeys to local farmers markets for inspiration.

"For me, it turns on that switch. It really gets those creative juices flowing," Hozinsky said. "When you're looking at a picture, you're reading a product list of what's coming out this week and what's available, they're words. Actually going to the market and looking at these ingredients, the vibrant colors, touching them, smelling them and often getting a taste of them, it's kind of the roots (of good food). You can add a bunch of cream to something or you can fry something, and sure, it's going to taste crispy. A lot of people would enjoy that, but to make some great refined food ... it starts with the quality of what you're getting."

Hozinsky came to The Strand House nearly three years ago, a few months after the upscale restaurant opened its doors near the Manhattan Beach Pier.

"We weren't sure if it was going to be temporary or a permanent change," Hozinsky recalled. "It definitely was a big adjustment coming in here and getting acquainted with everybody, everyone scratching their head looking at me like, 'Who's this guy?' When I first came in here, I was really learning about the dynamic of the kitchen, learning the stations and what goes on here, essentially absorbing the culture that already exists."

Greg Hozinsky is the executive chef at The Strand House in Manhattan Beach.



Hozinsky soon made the kitchen and the menu his own. He had to earn the trust of some of the regulars when he set out to make significant changes to the menu. He did that by "replacing something equally great or even better." A handful of the signature items are still on the menu, but even those have been "tweaked and adjusted" with his "personal touch."

"I always try to come up with something different ... I always feel that if I start doing the same thing over and over, I'm kind of giving up, I'm not trying to be creative anymore and I'm not pushing myself," Hozinsky said.

As a child, Hozinsky always enjoyed cooking. His family in Simi Valley were "basic eaters" and he grew up on overcooked chicken, minute rice, frozen vegetables and bagged salads.

"It may sound silly, but I always found happiness in it," Hozinsky said. "On my birthday, maybe it was a box cake, but I always enjoyed making my own cake or going to the store and putting who knows what in my scrambled eggs as a kid. I never really thought about doing it as my profession, as a career. And then one day it clicked—it was something I was really passionate about."

Hozinsky graduated from the California Culinary Academy in San Francisco in 2003, and worked under Michael Mina at AQUA in San Francisco. He eventually landed at Avenue in Manhattan Beach and was promoted to sous chef at 21 years old. He was the chef de cuisine at Frascati in Palos Verdes before becoming the executive chef at Shade Hotel in Manhattan Beach at 24 years old. In 2012, Hozinsky was named Zagat's "30 Under 30: LA's Hottest-Up-and-Comers."

Hozinsky's goal is to make The Strand House a destination for its cuisine and service, not just for the spectacular views that the restaurant has to offer.

"I don't want this to be the stereotypical beach kind of corporate feeling restaurant," he said. "I want it to be a unique experience."

The Strand House is located at 117 Manhattan Beach Blvd.

For more information, visit thestrandhousemb.com or call (310) 545-7470.