

Chef Andrew Gruel
Press Kit

2015

Chef Gruel | Seafood Guru - Sandwich Junkie - Restaurateur

Andrew Gruel, a graduate of Johnson & Wales University, is currently the Founder and Executive Chef of Slapfish Restaurant, the award-winning food truck turned international brick and mortar, based out of Huntington Beach, CA. Chef Gruel has taken Slapfish (bootstrapped!) from 2 food trucks to 10+ restaurant locations in just over 3 years.

Chef Andrew Gruel has appeared on multiple Radio, and TV Network shows including his most recent, Host of FYI's "Say It To My Face!" series which aired in May, 2015. Prior, he took on roles on major Food Network shows such as a Judge on the show *Food Truck Face Off*. Gruel has also been on "TODAY Show", PBS, Cooking Channel, as well as in numerous publications including The Wall Street Journal, Men's Health, Food & Wine Magazine, Entrepreneur, and Restaurant Business. In 2013 he was named top 40 under 40 entrepreneurs in Orange County.



How he got here:

After years of working in fine dining restaurants, hotels and diners -- ranging from The Ritz Carlton to the midnight shift at Denny's -- Chef Gruel's love of the ocean drove him to direct a non-profit project at The Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach, CA called "Seafood for the Future". Here he worked with hundreds of chefs, fisherman and like-minded organizations establishing a national culinary awareness for the sustainable seafood movement.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Heather Pastorini, 212-210-9760
heather.pastorini@aenetworks.com

FYI PREMIERES NEW ORIGINAL SERIES “SAY IT TO MY FACE!”

**RESTAURANTS AND CHEFS GET CHANCE AT REDEMPTION
FROM THEIR TOUGHEST ONLINE CRITICS**

PREMIERES SATURDAY, MAY 9 AT 10PM ET

NEW YORK, NY – April 2, 2015 – [FYI](#)'s new original series, “Say It To My Face!,” gives chefs and restaurant owners a chance to redeem themselves before their toughest online critics. Fifteen hour-long episodes are set to premiere on Saturday, May 9 at 10pm ET.

Never before have faceless online critics had so much power over the success or failure of restaurants. A chef can be on their game 99% of the time, but one mistake with one disgruntled customer, and they're facing an uphill battle to get diners back through the doors. In “Say It To My Face,” restaurants and critics meet face-to-face, for the first time, to air grievances.

With the mentorship of chef co-hosts, Andrew Gruel and Anthony Dispensa, each owner and chef will make-over their restaurant. From the menu, to the décor and staffing – they will look to elevate their business in hopes that their toughest online critics will change their reviews, while helping to encourage new customers to come through the door.

With over 18 years in the culinary business, Andrew is the CEO and Founder of Slapfish Restaurant Group, and Anthony is the West Coast Director of Operations for the restaurant group. A proponent in the power of social media when it comes to food and dining, Andrew personally responds to negative online reviews for his own restaurant business. From first-hand experience, Andrew and Anthony will help owners and chefs learn that listening to customer's criticism, while having an open mind, will prove to be beneficial in salvaging a restaurant's reputation before it's too late.

“Say It To My Face!” is produced for FYI by Pie Town Productions. Tara Sandler and Jennifer Davidson are executive producers for Pie Town. Molly O'Rourke serves as showrunner for Pie Town. Executive producers for FYI are Gena McCarthy, Toby Faulkner and Jordan Harman.

About FYI

For your inspiration, for your imagination or for your innovation, FYI™ embraces an adventurous, personalized and non-prescriptive approach to peoples' taste, space, look, story and more. FYI covers a range of stories and experiences that reflect how people actually live their lives today, not defined by just one passion or interest. FYI is a division of A+E Networks, a joint venture of the Disney-ABC Television Group and Hearst Corporation. The FYI website is located at fyi.tv. Follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/fyi and Facebook at facebook.com/fyi. For more press information and photography please visit us at: press.aenetworks.com.



Jesse Palmer Previews the First-Ever Food Truck Face Off



As four industry rookies take their places in the premiere series of **Food Truck Face Off**, host **Jesse Palmer** will be on hand to oversee the contest as an esteemed panel of judges decides the fate of the hopeful teams. Before you tune in on **Sunday at 11|10c** for a sneak-peek episode and watch what goes down on the road in Miami, hear from Jesse to learn what to expect from the season. Read on below for an exclusive interview and find out what he would pursue as a food truck concept.

What can fans expect from Food Truck Face Off?

Jesse Palmer: Amazing food, incredibly talented competitors, a ton of human emotion and a hungry host

What are your top most-memorable moments from the series?

JP: Shooting right in front of Niagara Falls and every time I handed the keys to a brand-new customized food truck to our winning teams

If you were to open up your own food truck, what concept would you pursue?

JP: Food truck classics with a modern twist. Think burgers with foie gras.

Tune in to a sneak-peek episode of **Food Truck Face Off** on Sunday, Sept. 28 at 11|10c.

<http://blog.foodnetwork.com/fn-dish/2014/09/jesse-palmer-previews-the-first-ever-food-truck-face-off/>

Unique Monthly Visitors: 16,515,000



Grill up seafood! Surf 'n' turf burgers and shrimp cubano



<http://www.today.com/food/grill-seafood-surf-n-turf-burgers-shrimp-cubano-1D79976234>

Daily Viewership: 1.1M

Pastrami Salmon BLT - Home & Family



Chef Andrew Gruel makes his famous BLT with the seafood twist.

Chef Andrew Gruel's Pastrami Salmon BLT

Chef Andrew Gruel visits the Home & Family kitchen to share his recipe for a traditional BLT with an interesting twist. Andrew swaps out the "B" with pastrami rubbed salmon and a tangy mustard sauce. Andrew knows a thing or two about preparing delicious food having graduated from culinary school at Johnson & Wales University and being the head chef at Slapfish Restaurant with locations in California, Baltimore, and the Middle East.

Get the Recipe >>

Check out more delicious recipes at the **Home & Family Pinterest Page**

Follow Andrew on Twitter **@ChefGruel**

Get more information about Andrew's restaurant at **SlapfishRestaurant.com**

<http://www.hallmarkchannel.com/home-and-family/friday-march-27th-2015>

Unique Monthly Visitors: 502,800

PASTRAMI SALMON "BLT"

A classic sandwich with a seafood twist!



Ingredients for Sandwich

- 2 each 5 oz Alaskan Salmon filets
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 T brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon coarsely ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper
- 1 pinch allspice
- 4 slices rye bread
- 2 heirloom tomato - thick slice
- 6 slices pancetta
- 1 head butter leaf lettuce - separated
- 1 fresh Avocado

Ingredients fro Mustard Sauce

- 2 T dijon mustard
- 1 T mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon chopped garlic
- 1 lemon juiced and zested
- 1 Tablespoon chives chopped

Directions:

1. Rub the salmon all over with the pastrami seasoning. Allow to sit for 10 minutes.
2. While the salmon is "curing", combine the ingredients for the mustard sauce.
3. Heat a non-stick skillet over medium high heat. Add grape seed oil and heat until almost shimmering but NOT smoking. Add salmon skin side up and sear for 2-3 minutes. Flip Salmon.
4. Add pancetta to the pan with the salmon and cook until salmon is finished and pancetta is crispy, another 3 minutes.
5. Remove salmon and pancetta from pan and place on a plate. Toast bread briefly in the pan.
6. Build the sandwiches as follows - lay down toasted bread, smother base in sauce, add lettuce, add thick sliced tomato, add salmon, add pancetta, add avocado, add more sauce, top with bread.

<http://www.hallmarkchannel.com/home-and-family/recipes/pastrami-salmon-blt>

Unique Monthly Visitors: 502,800



2015 TOP 100 MOVERS & SHAKERS

The top restaurant chains, trends and technologies shaping the fast casual segment.

62 Slapfish

Thanks to its sustainably sourced seafood supply, Slapfish was named a Top 7 Eco-Minded Restaurant in the U.S. by Food & Wine Magazine. Founded by Food Network Chef Andrew Gruel, Slapfish recently opened new stores in southern California and Dubai and is working on its airport presence.

To help with its growth, the California-based chain brought on a new VP of operations, Greg Griffie. In the fall, it also launched a "Little Sharks Menu" for kids.

The seafood concept's plans for 2015 call for four new stores to open in the U.S.: at Baltimore-Washington International Airport, the University Center near the University of California

– Irvine, Los Angeles International Airport and another non-airport location in Los Angeles this fall.

"We want to satisfy seafood cravings around the globe by presenting flavorful plates that are also sustainable," said Gruel, whose concept began as a social media-driven food truck in 2011. "Our two new airport locations will introduce Slapfish to an international audience of millions."

<http://www.fastcasual.com/topics/top-100/>

Unique Monthly Visitors: 131,600

Men's Health

Eat to live, live to eat

GUY GOURMET

The Easy Way to Cook Incredible Chowder

It's time to stop eating the stuff from the can



Newbie home cooks often think that making soup is difficult. They'd rather crack open a can and call it dinner. Here's the thing: Unless you're building a consommé from homemade beef stock or simmering a lentil stew for hours, you don't have to spend a ton of effort or time to make a great soup.

That's because soup is, in itself, a perfect cooking medium. Hot broth helps cook food through and, while those ingredients simmer, they infuse the soup with their flavors.

Check out this recipe for chowder. After building a base of hearty vegetables, you add water (stock or broth would work too) and tomatoes. Then in go your additional ingredients. You add the potatoes first, because they take longer to turn tender. The fish and greens drop in at the end because they'll finish more quickly. In all, the whole soup will take you less than an hour and you'll have leftovers for days.

Plus, the recipe is accommodating. Want to add some lump crabmeat and/or shrimp? Go for it. Love beans? Pour in some kidney beans and cannellini beans when you add the chickpeas. Think the soup could use some hot sauce? By all means, go wild.

Chowder

*Recipe by Andrew Gruel, chef and owner of **Slapfish** in Huntington Beach, CA*

What you'll need:

- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 large carrot, peeled and chopped
- 2 medium celery ribs, chopped
- 1 small parsnip, peeled and chopped
- ½ small fennel bulb, chopped
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 cup white wine
- 1 gallon water
- 2 qt. diced tomato in juice
- 8 baby red potatoes, large diced
- 1 15-oz can chickpeas, rinsed
- 1 Tbsp fish sauce
- 1 lb. choice of skinless fish, such as salmon, cod, halibut
- 3 cups baby spinach
- 2 cups chopped Swiss chard
- Salt and pepper, to taste

How to make it:

1. In a large stockpot, heat the olive oil over medium high. Add the carrots, celery, parsnips, fennel, and onion. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the onions are soft and translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and sauté until aromatic, about 45 seconds. Add the white wine and reduce until the wine is almost evaporated, 10 to 15 minutes.
2. Add the water, tomatoes and juice, potatoes, chickpeas, and fish sauce. Lower the heat to medium and cook until the potatoes are tender, about 20 minutes.
3. Add the fish, spinach, and chard. Cook until the fish is flaky and cooked through, 5 to 10 minutes. Makes 8 to 10 servings.

<http://www.menshealth.com/guy-gourmet/easy-way-cook-incredible-chowder>

Unique Monthly Visitors: 8,558,669



The country's craziest culinary combos



If there's one thing we learned from 2014, culinarily-speaking, the only rule these days is that there are no rules. This anything-goes mentality is best demonstrated by the double take-inducing "frankenfoods" found across the country. Chefs ranging from humble, small-town types to some of the biggest names in the industry are indulging their inner mad scientist by serving the craziest combo dishes imaginable.

Here's a look at some examples:

Clobster cakes in Southern Calif.

→ With locations in Southern California and Dubai, "modern seafood shack" **Slapfish** throws several fishy curveballs at its patrons. Crab and lobster meat is combined to create "clobster" cakes and a "clobster" grilled cheese. Other eye-catchers include fries smothered in creamy clam chowder and a surf n' turf burger in which a ground beef patty is smothered in lobster and caramelized onions.

<http://experience.usatoday.com/food-and-wine/story/best-of-food-and-wine/food/2015/01/01/crazy-hybrid-dishes/20638487/>

Unique Monthly Visitors: 35,134,000



feature

40 UNDER FORTY



It isn't enough to say that this year's list is comprised of talented young people. The 40 men and women who made this year's roster represent what - regardless of age - many aspire to be. They are fearlessly passionate, dynamically clever and as fast on their feet as Olympic ice skaters (*one of whom made our list*). Finding a range of charismatic personalities with inventive ideas, expertise and business acumen was key in this year's selection. From the executive offices at Angel Stadium to the halls of O.C.'s booming tech companies, the OC Register Metro team sought out individuals with the inside track on what's next. Keep an eye out - Orange County's young leaders are making waves. - Jenna Sweeney

#FOODTRUCKVISIONARIES

ANDREW GRUEL 33

CO-FOUNDER @ SLAPFISH RESTAURANT GROUP

Andrew Gruel and Jethro Naude are local restaurateurs credited for turning a broken down food truck into an international franchise in three short years.

The duo saw an opportunity to redefine the seafood dining experience with their company, Slapfish Restaurant Group, which has received numerous awards for its innovative take on seafood and sustainable practices.

Gruel attributes his success at a young age to a fear of failure and having supportive parents. Naude is what some might call a workaholic. So far, it's paid off.

Slapfish's flagship restaurant is in Huntington Beach. The company is also a



franchised brand, with units set to open in the Middle East and elsewhere in California.

Gruel and Naude differentiate their brand from other seafood restaurants by buying food directly and processing it in-house, by using a chef-driven menu, and by creating food with a mass appeal.

Both Gruel and Naude are adventurers at heart and were exposed to the restaurant industry at a young age. Gruel hitchhiked alone across

the United States and Canada at 19, washing dishes in restaurants. Naude sold fish and chips out of his garage in South Africa when he was only 15.

The best business advice Gruel ever received? "Personality trumps intelligence," he says.

Persistence is key to Naude's success. "Believe in your concept and yourself, and never give up," he says.

- Heidi Kulicke

Entrepreneur[®] MAGAZINE

OPPORTUNITY

There have always been Americans who can't stomach seafood, but over the past few decades the number of fish-o-phobes in the U.S. has swelled. Many environmentally conscious diners are swearing off seafood due to the difficulty of determining which species are being harvested into oblivion and which aren't. Some consumers simply don't trust what they're being sold.

A report last year by the nonprofit group Oceana shows that one-third of the fish sold in the U.S. is mislabeled. In Southern California, 52 percent of the fish tested in grocery stores and restaurants was not what was advertised. In New York City, 94 percent of the fish being sold as tuna was a different

species. Nearly two-thirds of the "wild" salmon tested in grocery stores and restaurants across the country turned out to be farm-raised.

That news dismayed Andrew Gruel, who launched his Slapfish sustainable seafood truck in 2011 in Orange County, Calif., and the following year opened a brick-and-mortar restaurant by that name in Huntington Beach. His goal: to ease the minds and raise the consciousness of seafood lovers—and to get more people eating fish.

The decade before starting Slapfish, Gruel immersed himself as a seafood cook on the East Coast. "Over 10 years, I kept watching these different fish species come in and out of vogue," he recalls.



"We wanted to make seafood fun, give it a Shake Shack vibe."

Fish foodies: Jethro Naude (left) and Gruel.



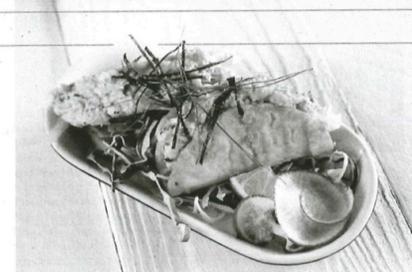
OPPORTUNITY

"I kept asking why we were changing fish [shen] we could get the same organic chicken day in and day out.

"The reason," he continues, "was because the oceans were running out of those species. I started hearing about issues with seafood from every angle, from farmers and fishermen to restaurants and conservationists."

That's when he decided to learn about sustainable seafood and help bring that knowledge to the restaurant community. In 2008 he was director of the Aquarium of the Pacific Seafood for the Future program, which teaches chefs and consumers how to purchase and use sustainable seafood.

In 2010 Gruel teamed with Jethro Naude, a local sustainable seafood wholesaler. Their idea was simple: use Naude's connections to cut out the middleman, buy directly from fishermen and serve high-quality, sustainable seafood at casual-dining prices. To



drive the point home, they chose not to build a restaurant at first; instead they leased a food truck.

"On day one, we sold out of everything we had," says Gruel, who went on to add two more trucks to his fleet, selling fish tacos and lobster-on-a-stick all around Los Angeles and Orange County. "We were focused on quality and tried to redefine seafood, to make it sexy again. People think seafood is stuffy, white-ta-

blecloth food. We wanted to make it fun, give it a Shake Shack vibe."

As they were manning their trucks, the duo was also running a wholesaling business, selling seafood to upscale Los Angeles restaurants. But the ultimate goal was always to bring sustainable seafood to the masses, and when they raised enough seed money in 2012, they sold their trucks and refocused their wholesale business on the

brick-and-mortar version of Slapfish.

Their modern spin on a fish shack has been a hit, winning local awards from the *OC Weekly* for best taco and best fish and chips and from the *Orange County Register* for best seafood restaurant. With hopes of eventually franchising Slapfish across the U.S., the duo recently signed a deal to open 75 units in the Middle East.



"We want people to know that whatever they order here is sustainable and fully transparent."

Regardless of their venture's eventual growth or reach, Gruel and Naude say they are committed to sustainability through their use of underutilized and stable fish species such as bream, arctic char, sardines and anchovies, as well as farmed barramundi and Alaskan halibut.

Meanwhile, they are finding ways to address supply. For example, they use South African hake, a fish similar to cod or haddock, in their fish and chips and tacos, and they built their own

nonprofit processing plant in South Africa to supply it.

"That means we can set the specs on how the fish is cut and handled," Gruel says. "It also means we know the family-owned boats the hake comes from. It decreases labor costs and keeps a lot of people employed."

What's served up at Slapfish at any given time is a direct result of continual monitoring of data on fish stocks and management strategies. If declines in a species are detected, the fish gets pulled from the restaurant's menu. For instance, last year Gruel and Naude switched from yellowfin tuna to the more prevalent wild Pacific albacore.

"We want people to know that whatever they order here is sustainable and fully transparent," Gruel says. "Our goal is to get people to start eating different species of fish that are so tasty that they'll forget they've never heard of them before." —JASON DALEY



Slapfish Restaurant Owner Shares Sustainability Campaign



STUDIO CITY (CBSLA.com) — Chef Andrew Gruel, owner of Slapfish restaurant, joined us on KCAL9 Wednesday afternoon to talk about menu items along with his “Summer of Sustainability” campaign.

Slapfish offers a relaxed, casual setting where customers can enjoy great “boat-to-plate” **eco-friendly meals**, such as a lobster and shrimp grinder or wild Pacific albacore tuna salad.

Gruel is deeply committed to getting his customers to eat more of the right types of seafood, emphasizing fresh quality and responsibly sourced sustainable offerings within his restaurant.

Popularly known for serving as a judge on The Cooking Channel's Food Truck Face Off, Gruel is in production for a Food Network show that will be released this year.

Slapfish is originally based in Huntington Beach and is quickly expanding, with a location open in Laguna Beach and one in Newport Beach that is set to open in fall.

<http://losangeles.cbslocal.com/2014/07/23/slapfish-restaurant-owner-shares-sustainability-campaign/>

Unique Monthly Visitors: 12,916,600

CHEFS' FOOD VICES | LAGUNA'S OLD WORLD ARTISANS NEW: BONUS CONTENT WITH LB MAG PLUS

LAGUNA BEACH

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2014 • OCINSITE.COM

Eat + Drink Issue

Magazine

NEW CHEFS ON THE BLOCK

4 KITCHEN COMMANDERS SHAKING UP THE CITY



AT YOUR SERVICE
PERSONAL CHEFS
WHIP UP TASTY
AND CREATIVE
MEALS

ON TAP
CELEBRATE
OKTOBERFEST
AT TOP
BEER HOT
SPOTS

**FROM
SIDE DISH
TO STAR**
VEGGIES
TAKE
CENTER
STAGE

The latest kitchen connoisseurs to set up shop in Laguna are bringing a fresh approach to an already impressive dining scene.

By Bria Balliet | Photos by Robert Zaleski

The city of Laguna Beach boasts many enviable characteristics. From the obvious (like the stunning coastline and perfect weather) to the hidden gems (such as the historic cottages and scenic hikes), our seaside town is known for having the best of pretty much everything. Added to that sparkling reputation are the numerous new eateries that have arrived on the scene this year. From the high quality yet casual Slapfish, which sits steps away from the Main Beach boardwalk, to fine dining in the canyon at Ivory Restaurant & Lounge, there is no shortage of options to satisfy even the most discerning palate.

Making this diverse culinary scene possible are the masters of the kitchen—the chefs whose talents have led them (or led them back, in some cases) to Laguna Beach. Through their varied backgrounds and distinct specialties, there is one consistent trait found in all of Laguna's newest chefs: They couldn't be happier to be here.

SLAPFISH

Chef Andrew Gruel

When Andrew Gruel was living and working in his native New Jersey, he never imagined that he would end up on the coast of sunny California, let alone operating a chain of sustainable seafood restaurants with locations stretching from Laguna Beach to Dubai. But that is just where the chef and owner of Slapfish finds himself today, successfully maintaining a growing franchise that began as a simple food truck.

Oddly enough, it was his time out of the kitchen that led to Andrew's current culinary adventure. "I took a little time off right before Slapfish, and I signed on with the Aquarium of the Pacific to direct a sustainable seafood program," he explains. It was during this time that Andrew was able to develop his passion for responsible fishing and formulate his plans for the future. "I've always been into ocean conservation [and] seafood," he says. "I was promoting sustainable seafood through the aquarium ... and working with like-minded people, so that was kind of the genesis of Slapfish."

Without the money for a stand-alone restaurant right off the bat, Andrew (with a business partner) launched the Slapfish food truck in 2011. There, he perfected his recipes and earned the following and capital to support his first brick-and-mortar store, which he opened in Huntington Beach in 2012 followed by the Laguna location in 2014.

Though Laguna wasn't the original home of Slapfish, Andrew knew he wanted to open in this seaside town from the beginning. "It's a very ocean-friendly city. ... It was really just about connecting with a community that understands the need for responsible choices and how what we choose and what we eat affects the ocean," he says.

Andrew also understands the need to bring something new to this community. "Laguna has some really great options for full-service, sit-down seafood," Andrew says. "The last thing we want to do is be a part of saturating the market." To avoid this, Slapfish tweaked its model specifically for Laguna, opting for a more casual, "grab 'n' go," beach-shack feel without sacrificing quality.

"... Because we have a unique purchase model where we buy very close to the source, ... we can provide the quality of fine dining with the type of seafood but at the cost and convenience of faster food." This elevated but casual concept perfectly reflects the Laguna lifestyle, and lives up to the Slapfish motto: "Ridiculously fresh. Refreshingly responsible."



<http://lagunabeachmagazine.com/new-chefs-block/>

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