



Rick Stein, Owner

Rick Stein came into the restaurant business in a roundabout way, after more than twenty years dealing in antiques and fine arts on the east coast. Buying trips took him to Europe for several weeks each year, where he discovered a passion for wine and fine food. "The buying was the reason for the trips, of course," he says. "Eating at great restaurants was just one of the perks." But somewhere along the way, the focus began to shift, and food and wine began to consume his imagination. "At some point I realized that where we were having dinner that night was more important than whatever I might be buying that day. I began to study restaurants, trying to figure out why this place was great, why that one wasn't. Finally, I decided that if food and wine meant so much, I ought to start doing something different with my life."

Something different turned out to be the Full Moon Grill, which he opened in 1991. "Boulder seemed like a great place to open a restaurant. For me it was just the right size, and close enough to a large city. Having a university here, with the opportunity to take some classes and enjoy college sports, was a huge plus. (Even more than he thought - he met his wife Susan at a CU football game) The people were educated and well-traveled, quality raw ingredients were readily available, and I loved the town the moment I drove in."

The Full Moon was a success, and four years later Rick took over the operation of the historic Chautauqua Dining Hall, which he still directs. After fifteen years in its original location, he had the opportunity to move the Full Moon to a new location, and with the move, decided to re-name the restaurant Alba. Alba is a city of about 30,000 in Piemonte, in northwestern Italy. It's adjacent to the Langhe hills, a gently rolling vineyard region, often covered in fog, that specializes in growing Nebbiolo,

used to make Barolo and Barbaresco. "The old name didn't really reflect what we'd been doing for the past several years, offering great Italian food and wine. Some people would walk in thinking we were a Chinese restaurant. Others couldn't remember the name. We got every moon variation you can imagine. After we re-opened as Alba, a woman came in and asked, 'Why did you have to change the name of the Half-Moon Café?' For me, Alba and the Langhe represent the very best of Italy. The wines are incomparable, the food and hospitality are exquisite, the landscape is stunning. It's impossible not to be inspired by the place, and I thought if I could bring just a part of that to Boulder, I'd be doing something people would really appreciate."

Rick's philosophy about food reflects the qualities of Italian cooking that first grabbed his attention: "For Italians, it's all about the ingredients. Find the best, the freshest available. Use your imagination, but don't go crazy. Take the time to do it right, and be careful to keep it balanced, so you can taste everything you put in. Leave out anything that would overpower or steal the spotlight from the main ingredient, the star. Season it properly, that's a perfect dish."