

A Culinary Journey Of The Senses

An Interview with Moe Issa, Founder, Brooklyn Fare Kitchens & Markets and Chef's Table at Brooklyn Fare

EDITORS' NOTE Founded in 2009 in downtown Brooklyn, Brooklyn Fare (brooklynfare.com) is the vision of Moe Issa, who was raised in the Park Slope neighborhood just around the corner. Issa realized that the borough was in need of a quality grocer while driving a Pepsi truck route in the area in the 1980s and '90s. With his commitment to bringing an outstanding selection at affordable prices to the community, he opened his first store at the corner of Schermerhorn and Hoyt in downtown Brooklyn. In addition to groceries, the Brooklyn store also housed the celebrated tasting menu restaurant, Chef's Table at Brooklyn Fare, which became the borough's only Michelin three-star restaurant before it relocated to Brooklyn Fare's first Manhattan location in 2016. Family owned and operated,



Moe Issa

Brooklyn Fare merges Issa's vision of providing high-quality foods with familiar products in a convenient and approachable shopping experience. The concept took hold, and he successfully opened his first Manhattan location at 431 West 37th Street in the Hudson Yards neighborhood followed by a second at 666 Greenwich Street in the historic Archive Building. The third Manhattan location at 75 West End Avenue opened in 2021 and is the company's first store on the Upper West Side. The addition of

Cherry Street, opening later this year, will be the fourth Manhattan location and Brooklyn Fare's first on the East Side. Issa is also pleased to work alongside his son, Brandon, who serves as the company's Regional Manager, and his nephew, Mike, who is instrumental in providing high-level service.



What was the vision for creating Brooklyn Fare?

We wanted to mimic that of an old-fashioned neighborhood market relying on providing an unrivaled selection of high-quality produce, hard-to-find ingredients, and everyday essentials, all while offering top-notch customer service in a friendly and laid-back environment. It was equally important to offer high-quality prepared foods made from scratch in our on-site kitchen and commissary, and to embellish our grocery selection that blends the new and upcoming with beloved classics. Of course, we've had to evolve and adapt to the needs of our communities, but so far it has all worked out.

Will you provide an overview of the Chef's Table at Brooklyn Fare experience?

The experience of the Chef's Table at Brooklyn Fare is to provide the highest quality in every aspect that a restaurant could offer. I'm talking the most luxurious and rare ingredients, the pinnacle of wine selections, adorned by the best of the best creature comforts for our guests. As soon as you step foot into the kitchen, which is of course where you will be dining, you will witness Chef Max Natmessnig and Chef Marco Prins and their culinary team of professionals prepare only the finest of ingredients in a symphony and perfect harmony of what will become a 12-course tasting menu, although I like to think of it as a culinary journey of the senses because it is truly a visceral experience, hands down. To enjoy this melody of unique foods flown in from all over the world paired with some of the most exquisite and sought-after wines that are hand-picked by our Head Sommelier, Peter Joung, is a transcendental experience. That is our goal, to knock the ball out of the park with every last detail.



Brooklyn Fare's culinary creations made from the most luxurious and rare ingredients



How important is it for Brooklyn Fare to continue to evolve and adapt its menu?

Extremely important – it's our highest priority. We want our customers to experience only the best-of-the-best of what is available. With that considered, there are times where the ingredients we want are not the best that day, so we have to be able to adapt to what is available. That's just part and parcel of being a world-class restaurant. It's what we do.

Will you discuss Chef's Table at Brooklyn Fare's wine program?

The focus of the program always has been wines of the Old World. We appreciate winemakers' long history, the wines' specific terroirs, and their craftsmanship. We also believe that each bottle has its own story. Our wine program is a journey through time, offering guests both classic and trending styles of wine. Whether it's the rare gems or the

hidden gems, our collection aims to surprise guests at every price point.

Will you highlight the talent and expertise of the chefs at Brooklyn Fare?

Chef Max and Chef Marco are, in my opinion, two of the most talented artists in the culinary world. From their upbringings in Europe sprouted their love affair and affinity for cooking, and the two have traveled the world learning from some of the very best teachers, respectively. They have worked for me in the past and I understand their unique capabilities and individual strengths. It is an honor to have them at the helm on this incredible journey 13 years in the making, and to have them be a part of our restaurant's story, or in this case, history.

What do you feel are the keys to a fine dining experience?

A fine dining experience takes into account the entire picture. Like I said earlier, it's visceral, not just tangible or taste – it's about the overall aesthetic and feel. Everything that guests interact with has to be perfect and unique. It's about them, not us. The guests always come first. That's the golden rule of hospitality, and in fine dining it's no different. From the food, to the music, to the cutlery, to the stemware, to the napkins – everything is picked with the utmost care and intent.

How do you focus your efforts leading Brooklyn Fare?

By encouraging our team to set high standards and goals for themselves in their work and personal lives. My life has had many ups and downs, but the one thing that kept me going was the belief I had in myself and visions of achievement in every aspect of my life.

Did you always know you had an entrepreneurial spirit and desire to build your own business?

Yes, I became self-employed at 18 years old. In the '80s and '90s, I drove a delivery truck for Pepsi in Brooklyn, calling on many neighborhood businesses, from the large chain supermarkets to the bodegas. It was a passion of mine serving my community and I realized that what downtown Brooklyn needed was a true born and bred market, something the locals could call their own. That's when the seed which would eventually become Brooklyn Fare was planted. I opened my first store at the corner of Hoyt and Schermerhorn Streets in downtown Brooklyn in 2009. That's where the Chef's Table at Brooklyn Fare was born before it relocated to its current space at our West 37th Street location in 2016. Since the company's founding, we've opened three stores in Manhattan and are eagerly anticipating the opening of our fourth store on the Lower East Side later this year. It's been a wild ride, to say the least, but it's been awesome to see a dream come to fruition.

What are your priorities for Chef's Table at Brooklyn Fare as you look to the future?

To be the pinnacle of fine dining, a goal which we have reached for the past 13 years. I know it's possible – we've done it many times before. We are building a strong team, tightening up our core, and are ready to welcome the world back as we take center stage. We hope you'll join us at the Chef's Table. ●

