



2017 SoCal VegFest Vegan Cupcake Competition: Judges Bios



PIETRO GALLO is Owner and Kitchen Manager of [Civico 1845](#) (San Diego, CA, USA). His love of cooking and Italian cuisine started with his mother at home in the kitchen. Pietro studied economics at the University Niccolò Cusano in Rome, Italy before moving to San Diego. His passion for veganism and healthy living was the inspiration behind the extensive vegan menu at his restaurant, which includes vegan versions of classic Italian dishes such as Caprese Mozzarella, Fettucine Alla Bolognese with Seitan Ragout, Ravioli Boscaioia with Truffle Wild Mushroom Sauce, and Tiramisu Italiano & Gelato.

TARA PUNZONE is chef and owner of [Punzone's Plant Based Italian](#) (Los Angeles, CA, USA). She was the Culinary Director of Real Food Daily, with locations in West Hollywood, Pasadena, and inside of Terminal 4 at LAX. In May of 2017 under her direction, RFD took the #1 spot in a listing of the Best Vegan Brunches in the United States by VegNews Magazine. She has been vegan since the age of 10. Tara is also the former Executive Chef of Pure Food and Wine, a fine dining raw vegan restaurant in New York City. She holds a Masters of Fine Arts degree from Long Island University in New York, as well as a BFA in Photography from The School of Visual Arts New York.



IAN BEACH is Executive Chef and Chef Instructor at [Exhibit](#) (Santa Ana, CA, USA), the student-run restaurant at The Art Institutes of California Orange County. Ian grew up in Scotland, UK, and graduated from the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York. He has worked in 4-star and Michelin-rated restaurants across the country. In addition to his impressive culinary background, Ian was bass guitarist for the 80's & 90's alternative rock band The Buck Pets, who toured with artists such as The Ramones, Jane's Addiction, and Neil Young.