

## Church & State Update: Chef Tony Esnault Takes Over From Jeremy Berlin

By [Amy Scattergood](#) Tue., Jan. 15 2013 at 6:59 AM



A. Scattergood  
Chef Tony Esnault at Patina

The downtown bistro [Church & State](#) has a new chef. Former Patina executive chef Tony Esnault took over the kitchen recently, succeeding Jeremy Berlin. The move came when Berlin, who had worked with Gordon Ramsay previously and had come to Los Angeles from England to open Ramsay's [The London West Hollywood](#), was tapped by his former employer for a new Ramsay project in Las Vegas. Berlin departs on good terms with Church & State's owner, Yassmin Sarmadi, who hired Berlin to succeed Joshua Smith, who himself followed Walter Manzke behind the stoves.

Sarmadi has been working with Esnault on Spring, a French restaurant going into the ground floor of the Douglas Building at the corner of Spring and Third streets in downtown Los Angeles. Since that project is still some ways away -- target opening date is late 2013 -- Sarmadi told us yesterday that Esnault decided to fill in at Church & State. And Esnault had so much fun cooking the bistro cuisine of his native France that he decided to make the move permanent.

Esnault will be the main chef at Spring when it opens, Sarmadi says, but chefs work best when they're in the kitchen -- not going through the sometimes endless process of waiting for a restaurant to open. [Esnault left Patina last year to open Spring](#) with Sarmadi, and he's been consulting, and wandering city government hallways and farmers markets since.

The time off, it seems, has done nothing to dispel Esnault's fondness for Southern California produce. At Patina, the chef specialized in glorious dishes featuring vegetables, and he has said that one of the reasons he loves Los Angeles is our stellar market produce. Since Esnault took over the kitchen at Church & State, he's been making nettle soup and chicory and citrus salads. Also new on the menu: a traditional Alsatian tarte flambé, new charcuterie and pâtés, and a coq au vin.

Sarmadi says the menu probably will continue to evolve under Esnault, but that the downtown bistro will stay fairly unchanged. "Through different chefs we've always remained who we are."