

Master Chef

*Julio Nascimento
of European
Personal Chef
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By Rick Weinberg, Editor, California Business Journal

Julio Nascimento is a genuine master of his craft, a brilliantly creative and innovative chef with personality, charisma, charm and sincerity.

One of only a handful of certified personal chefs in Orange County and one of only an estimated 50 in the world, Nascimento has become a phenomena, a savior to many families in Southern California.

He has not only redefined the essence and meaning of what a personal and event chef is and should be, but he has also made his ultra-high level of gourmet cooking, service and presentation amazingly affordable to time-crunched families through his California-based company, European Personal Chef, Inc.

Because of Nascimento and his wife and business partner, Suzan, busy people and families who are under the time pressure of today's fast-paced work and living environment no longer have to resort to fast food, TV dinners and other unhealthy meals.

What "Chef Julio" and his wife did is create a first-of-its-kind dining program whereby people and families can purchase five gourmet meals for two people for just \$129. Each additional person is \$50.

Do the math: that means a week's worth of meals for a family of four is \$229, or \$11.45 per plate, which in many cases is less than what many people already spend on inferior meals and food, much of which they wind up throwing out.

"It's just an unbelievable service," says Trish White, a San Juan Capistrano, Calif. resident who has been getting weekly meals from Eu-



One of Chef Julio's magnificent presentations.

ropean Personal Chef for years. "I can't say enough about it and Chef Julio. He's literally saved our lives."

Before Nascimento arrived at her doorstep in full chef's gear and with all the food and cooking utensils, as well as his vivacious personality and energy, Trish was living a nightmare: she had an 18-month-old toddler crying and tugging on her leg, begging for attention the entire time she was trying to cook dinner.

Her meals, she admits, didn't come out as well as she would have preferred. Shortly thereafter, she found Chef Julio, whom she describes as "the answer to my prayers."

The timing was perfect too. Trish had visitors coming in from London, and one of them happened to be the former head chef at an elite hotel. Trish knew she had to work some magic—and work it fast.

"My sister heard about Chef Julio at a party, so I called him and said, 'I've got an emergency, can you come right over?' And he did. When I saw his menu, I thought, 'There's no way we can afford this. Oprah

has a personal chef, not plain people.' But when Julio told me how much it was, I went, '*Oh my God, no way?* Why don't you just cook for me *every week?*'"

And that's exactly what he did.

"He's changed our lives," Trish says. "The food is unbelievably great and it's healthy for you because they're balanced, nutritious meals with no preservatives, and it's so affordable. It actually worked out cheaper for us to have Julio than not to have him."

Nascimento grew up in the southern Portugal seaside town of Portimao. His father was a fisherman, and since money was tight and the fish was free, the family ate fish for breakfast, lunch and dinner—every day.

Julio had never even fried so much as an egg for the first 17 years of his life. But when he went to the military and an officer discovered he was from the same town where many great chefs were born, he belatedly, "*You – to the kitchen.*"

From that moment on, Nascimento fell in love with cooking, realizing it was a perfect match for his personality. He wound up earning four culinary degrees from four universities in three countries, and also opened two successful restaurants in Portimao.

After several years of working 19-hour days, he decided enough was enough, and he wanted to fulfill his dream of traveling to America. He had met Suzan at one of his restaurants several years earlier, and they kept in touch. So when he decided to come to the states in 1998, he called her and wound up staying with her. They soon fell in love and got married.

Later that year, after Julio became head chef at Ragazzi in Long Beach, California, he received a letter from the U.S. Personal Chef Association that caught his attention. "It was like a light went off, like I had seen God," he says, beaming.

Turns out that becoming a personal chef was the ideal situation for him. After all, "He had 'the package' to be a personal chef and an event chef," Suzan says. "He loves to cook and entertain, he's creative and

personable. It was a perfect fit."

Indeed it is. The demand for Nascimento grew rapidly, and he found himself sprinting from house to house, cooking meal after meal and entertaining households all the while with his electric and positive persona. He was working at 10-12 homes per week, and it became exhausting.

European Personal Chef, Inc.

**Julio and Suzan
Nascimento**

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So Julio and Suzan brainstormed, hoping to find a solution and still be able to serve their customers. They found the answer in "The What's For Dinner Solution?," a concept they created where people and families can go to Chef Julio's web site and choose their own menu for

their weekly gourmet dinners in just minutes. The program gained so much steam that the Nascimentos moved into a huge new commercial kitchen and building.

When you put the entire package together – Chef Julio's cooking and entertainment skills with the quality of the food – it's a dazzling, delicious and irresistible combination and experience. Just ask Candy Stevens, whose life has changed – for the better – because of European Personal Chef. Stevens, a Temecula, Calif. resident who runs a custom home building company with her husband, has a very busy lifestyle and doesn't get home to early evening. The last thing her husband wanted her to do was spend 45 minutes cooking a meal and *then* cleaning up. Enter Nascimento, the savior.

"Now I can come home, and within a half hour I have this fabulous meal for my family that is healthy and delicious," Candy says. Equally important is that the Stevens's can now entertain friends more often, something they love to do.

"I have more company over than I ever have before," Candy says, "and instead of cooking, cleaning and stressing out, I can enjoy my guests. It's fantastic. My guests are like, 'Wow, this is incredible,' and I'm like, 'Yeah, I can do it all,'" she says with a laugh.

That's exactly what Chef Julio wants to see and hear – people laughing, people having fun, people enjoying life and his food to the fullest.

"I get a tremendous amount of enjoyment from doing this," he says. "This is why I'm here."

