

Xavi Roca

Food and Beverage Director, Ritz-Carlton San Francisco

From busboy to Food and Beverage Director at Ritz-Carlton, Xavi Roca has worked his way up by experiencing various aspects of the hospitality industry. His work ethic and approach is to lead by example. “I never ask someone to do something I wouldn’t do or haven’t done. My philosophy is to be hand-in-hand with my staff. How can I help them? What do they need?”

A native of Barcelona, Spain, Roca began working for Ritz-Carlton during his second year at university in 1998. In the four years he spent at Ritz-Carlton Arts Barcelona, Roca quickly moved up from busboy to a Banquet Manger. “I knew I wanted to make a career of this industry,” states Roca. “I loved working the long nights, the weddings that started at 8 p.m. and ended at 7 a.m., and I knew it was the place for me.”

In 2002, Roca was invited to join the property in St. Thomas. Next stop, Ritz-Carlton Palm Beach, offered both a city and beach lifestyle. At Palm Beach, Roca managed the restaurants and bars on property before switching to Fine Dining Manager. “Fine dining was an eye-opening experience,” Roca explained. “I realized that I wanted to work on both sides . . . banquets and fine dining.”

Roca has been the Food and Beverage Director in San Francisco



PHOTO: ALLISON LEVINE

for two years. In that time, the hotel has transitioned to a more contemporary, casual venue attracting a younger crowd. The 5 star (and 1 Michelin star) white glove restaurant formerly called The Dining Room has been converted to the urban Parallel 37 with a contemporary seasonal American menu by Chef Ron Siegel.

In addition to the restaurant, banquets and in-room dining, Roca also oversees the two hotel bars. The bar at Parallel 37 is a great place for before (or after) dinner drinks. “We have brought the kitchen to the cocktail,” explains Roca, “and the bar team shops with the Chef at the farmers’ market each week.” The Lounge located adjacent to the lobby, previously known for high tea, today offers a tea-infused cocktail program.

This past summer marked Roca’s 14th anniversary with Ritz-Carlton Hotels. “I love the company and its philosophy. The opportunities to grow and learn are amazing.” ■■

THE “5” LIST

Xavi Roca’s Top Five Faves:

- 1 Tempranillo and Albariño
- 2 When a customer requests a specific server
- 3 Sports bars
- 4 Cooking at home with friends with a bottle of Albariño
- 5 Eating, drinking good wine and relaxing with family

Xavi Roca’s Top Five Pet Peeves:

- 1 Unintelligible menus that are pretentious and use technical words
- 2 A dirty bar
- 3 Improper pouring of a draft beer—it must have foam!
- 4 Improper opening of a wine bottle: turn the cork, not the bottle
- 5 Lazy staff—don’t settle, keep learning and growing and be the best you can be