

2023 AAWC Annual Meeting SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Susanna Foo

For almost 40 years, Susanna has changed the paradigm of Chinese food, combining traditional Chinese ingredients with classical French techniques.

Susanna Foo was born in Inner Mongolia, China, and grew up in Taiwan. While studying at the National Taiwan University, she met her husband E-Hsin Foo. She and her husband later went to the United States for further studies. In 1979, they moved to Philadelphia, PA to help E-Hsin's family run the Center City branch of Hu-Nan, a neighborhood Chinese restaurant. Prior to this, Susanna had never worked in a professional kitchen.

It was at Hunan that Susanna met Jacob Rosenthal, founder of the Culinary Institute of America, who became a major influence in her life, and to whom she would later dedicate her first cookbook. With Rosenthal's recommendation, Susanna studied at the Culinary Institute of America where she learned French cooking techniques that she would later adapt to Chinese cuisine. Susanna believed that authenticity and improvisation in cooking are not contradictory, and should expand beyond national or regional boundaries. Her cooking style has changed the paradigm of Chinese food by combining the best and freshest Chinese ingredients with classical French techniques.

In 1987, she opened the eponymous Susanna Foo Chinese Cuisine, which serves a fusion of Chinese and French cuisine. In 1989, Esquire Magazine named Susanna Foo Chinese Cuisine as the best new restaurant of the year, and the Food & Wine magazine recognized Susanna as best new chef. In 1995, she published her first book, *Susanna Foo Chinese Cuisine: The Fabulous Flavors and Innovative Recipes of North America's Finest Chinese Cook*. This won her a James Beard Foundation Award for best international cookbook. She won a second James Beard Foundation Award in 1997 for the Best Chef in the Mid-Atlantic region.

She opened a new restaurant at the Borgata Casino complex in Atlantic City in 2003, and wrote a second book in 2005. In 2009, she sold Susanna Foo Chinese Cuisine after her husband fell ill. With her husband's passing a year later, followed by her son's death due to ALS, Susanna decided to retire and focus her time in consulting work, cooking classes, and fund raising for ALS and the Philadelphia Free Library.