

The Shake Family

There are few locals who are not aware of whom the Shake family is. Most for that matter have a favorite story or memory of how a member of the family did something special for them or someone they know. The Shake family story started with an "American Dream" four generations ago. The dream of an immigrant to provide for his family and give back to his community has grown into family more than worthy of being honored tonight by its peers. Although the Shakes have received many awards and honors throughout the years, they are equally excited by all of them. Every award reminds them of their parents' humble beginnings and how far all of them have come since then.

Sabu Shake, Sr. immigrated to the United States from Karachi, Pakistan. Even though few details are known about his upbringing, Sabu's family was in the business of supplying exotic animals to circuses throughout the world. Although many of his relatives were lost in shipwrecks, another family member helped him fulfill his dream to come to America. Sabu first lived in Los Angeles where he was able to "go Hollywood" and play a stunt double to movie star Sabu Dastagir in both the Elephant Boy and Jungle Book films. After leaving Los Angeles, Sabu moved to Sacramento where he met and married Isabella Pullano. In a ceremony unique to the times, they were married infusing both Italian and Indian traditions.

Wanting the very best for his family, Sabu ventured south to Monterey from Sacramento in hope of finding better employment opportunities. Driven by the fact that he had to leave his wife and first born son Benji at home in Sacramento, Sabu Sr. quickly secured a job at Los Laureles Lodge in Carmel Valley and sent for his young family. Because of his desire to provide for his family, a natural talent for cooking and hospitality was soon discovered. Not to mention, Sabu's willingness to learn! Shortly thereafter he got his first job on Fisherman's Wharf. Little did he know the legacy that would follow.

Lou Bottaro owner of Lou's Fish Grotto hired Sabu to work in the kitchen as a Chef's apprentice. Although the Chef was known to be cranky he took an instant liking to Sabu and taught him to prepare many recipes including the clam chowder that the Shake family is now famous for world-wide. At Lou's, Sabu first began getting acquainted with Monterey locals and Italians. It was Mike Marotta Sr.'s parents, after meeting Sabu at a Campari Club gathering at the restaurant, who sponsored Sabu for citizenship and assisted him in getting his naturalization.

After gaining much confidence and with his family continuing to grow, Sabu jumped at the chance to own and operate his own restaurant on the Wharf when one came available. Naming the small establishment that he purchased Old Fisherman's Grotto, Sabu rolled up his sleeves and worked tirelessly in both the front and back of the house. Soon he was able to buy the adjoining property, coincidentally named the "Shake Shack" and expanded the restaurant. No job was ever beneath him. Even up until his last days at the restaurant, Sabu would still bus tables, greet guests, or as he was most famously known for, hand out samples of clam chowder.

Isabella Shake's role in the family was just as busy. In addition to raising her six sons, Benji, David, Chris, Sabu Jr., Angelo, and Tene, she also helped Sabu with guest service needed in the front of the restaurant. An Italian Catholic herself, Isabella instilled family traditions, morals and faith in her sons, while they received strong work ethics from their father. Sabu too had a tremendous regard for the importance of family. Regardless of how busy Sabu was at the restaurant, he came home every evening to have dinner with his wife and sons. Also though regardless of how busy the restaurant was, Isabella got her sons to Church every Sunday.

Sabu and Isabella through the years had many other business dealings. They were involved in real estate, raising cattle, and farming. But regardless of what their income was Sabu and Isabella were givers to the community. Even before they were as successful as the family is today, they always believed in sharing and giving to those in need. Even though Sabu worked very hard to provide for his family, he was always grateful for the opportunities that were provided to him and was so proud to be in a position to provide joy to others. Isabella, known mainly to everyone as the "Mrs. Shake" is just as generous. She is always the first one to remember a friend or family member's birthday or special occasion. But all of her material gifts also include a God Bless You and reminder that Jesus loves you. Although the family always worked hard, and the Shake sons spent most of their childhood on Fisherman's Wharf, they did not lack love, enjoyment, and attention.

Through the years Sabu became a fixture at Fisherman's Wharf wearing a white cowboy hat and suit. His closet was filled with these identical outfits. Sabu sincerely enjoyed being in the hospitality industry and never complained about having to work a hard day. Although none of his sons continued the tradition of wearing the cowboy hat, the pure enjoyment of hard work and pride is inbred in every single one of them. As Chris Shake says about him and his brothers, "we've all been successful because we had the same teacher". None of them ever shied away from working hard. Although the hard work of their parents established them, each son had worked hard to make a name for themselves individually as well as a family. What started off as a 45-seat restaurant has grown into five family owned restaurants, retail and real estate operations, tourist attractions, a cooking show, cookbook, and more. Another passion for some of the Shake sons was commercial fishing in California, Oregon and Alaska, and the opportunity it gave them to provide their own freshly caught fish for their family restaurants. They still remain grateful for how much they were embraced by our local Italian fishing community. The Shake sons still go to work seven days a week just as their father did, and remain dedicated to their family and community. They have not only continued his legacy of hard work, but their parents' generosity also lives in all of them. A perfect example of that is the annual Sabu Shake Foundation fundraiser to benefit the Salvation Army. What started out as a way for the Shake family to keep Sabu's memory alive had turned in to a yearly event benefiting many deserving families.