

PORTRAIT

of the CHEF *as an*

AMERICAN

At 25 he was one of Ireland's youngest, Award Winning restaurateurs. Now, at 40, CHEF FRANCIS is celebrating ten years at the helm of Newburyport's Renowned *Plum Island Grille*, and becoming an American citizen.

He is that rarest of Celtic finds: an Irishman who can cook. But when Chef Francis Broadbery left Dublin, Ireland to follow his sweetheart back to her home in America, he never dreamed he'd find a country so gastronomically adventurous.

In Ireland during the 1990's, people were just beginning to expand their palates. Although organic produce and farm raised meats were becoming industry standard, foreign food was still exotic and restaurant goers were reluctant to try it. *"So, for me, it was exciting to come to America and find a country with such natural culinary diversity that people instinctively approached new flavors with open minds,"* says Francis, *"For a chef to be able to use ingredients from around the world in their cooking and to have their customers love it – what could be better than that?"*

Born into a boisterous clan of 18 children, Francis was raised on down-to-earth Irish home cooking. His indefatigable mother's response to seeing another head at the table was simply to *"add more water to the soup! My mother had a beautiful singing voice but she was not known for her cooking,"* he says, laughing, *"Except for her Christmas pudding, that was phenomenal, soaked in brandy and Guinness – it took weeks to make...I still can't replicate that."*

When Francis decided to become a chef, he left home to train in the US and Europe. Before becoming a member of Euro-Toques International, which counts amongst its

members some of the world's top chefs, and opening his first award winning restaurant in West Cork, Ireland.

"I was a very shy young chef when I opened my first restaurant. I had to start spending time in the front-of-house and it was extremely difficult for me. I felt awkward out of the kitchen and was reluctant to approach tables." says the chef, who is now known for his ebullient personality.

Since becoming the Co-owner/Executive Chef of the Plum Island Grille a decade ago, Chef Francis has often found himself the focus of media attention. *WCVB TV's Chronicle; North Shore, Portsmouth & Accent Magazines and The Boston Globe* have all featured him and the Grille has also been awarded *YANKEE Magazine's* prestigious *Editors' Choice* honor.

On July 4th, along with 104 immigrants (from more than 64 countries), Chef Francis was sworn in as an American citizen by retired US Supreme Court Justice, David Souter. The ceremony was overseen by the Governor and attended by his sweetheart (now wife) and their two sons.

"I know it sounds cliché," he says, *"but, it is possible grow here in a way that it can be difficult to do in Europe. I have been welcomed and encouraged in ways I'd never expected; now I love to meet the people who are eating my food! Getting to know them over the years has given me many good friends."*