Bio

**Richard Bell is the executive chef at The Bell Époque, Ventura County's only 4-star restaurant. He, along with pastry chef Jon Paulson and sous chef Adele Curtwood, were called "the new trifecta in California cuisine," by Ramone Estes of the L.A. Times.**

**Richard's interest in food was piqued at a young age, when he started foisting his culinary creations on his four younger siblings. This was a time of great excitement in his life. His parents, The Bells, formed a traveling variety act called The Bellweathers, in which they performed a sort of cocktail gymnastics, the first and the last time mixology and unicycling were to meet successfully. Unfortunately, this success meant the Bells had to leave their children for weeks at the time under the care of a doddering uncle. The young Bells stepped up to the plate, so to speak, in their absence. Richard's sisters took care of the laundry, the homework, and the bills. Uncle Rainy had been a chef in his time, and Richard took care of the meals under his direction.** His first memory, Richard says, involves peanut butter and pork rind soup.

After he graduated high school, the Bells sent Richard to The Culinary Institute of America, to explore his love of food in a slightly more rigorous and much less whimsical way. Though at first he chafed against the traditional French method of the school, he quickly flourished and was named Outstanding Student Chef of the Year nine years running, continuing to be awarded the prize long after he left in 2005.

Immediately following graduation, Richard became saucier under Heron Papia at the famous Le Ruffian in New York. He was said "to have tamed béarnaise and chastened madère, and made a fool of the rest." Le Ruffian is the first restaurant in the world to achieve and retain the coveted 7-start Michelin rating.

However, in 2006, to the shock of the food world, Richard left Le Ruffian, to open his own restaurant in the town of his youth, San Buenaventura. The Bell Époque transformed the sleepy seaside hamlet into a food lover's paradise. Richard revived the interest in local foods, especially the local citrus and avocados, and in a few short years, has transformed the California's position in the culinary landscape.