

In Her Own Words

Heidi Krahlung had fond memories of her eight years as Executive Chef at Smith Ranch in her 2004 oral history for the Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley.



“It was called Smith Ranch Homes, and I will never forget it. I got this incredible job; I got to build a million-dollar kitchen; I got to hire who I wanted, pay them what I wanted. The shift would start for people at 11:30 or 12:00. We would start by sitting down to lunch and talking about the menu for the day. When I look back, I think that was like utopia—this job, this perfect job that people could come, we would talk, we could have lunch. I mean, it was so civilized, and I think, ‘This was not the way that restaurants were run.’

I changed the menu every day, and every day I had something soulful. It is my kind of food. And there was always something very Americana—pot roast, or a beautiful Hobbs’ smoked ham or pork chops, something very basic and certainly more homey, and then there was something more heart healthy. So every day there was something that I called a Heidi dish, American soulful dish, and then a heart healthy dish that was very streamlined to light and more healthful. So that was every day.

We made all of our own bread there. We made all of our own pastries, and it was great—every day. Every day we changed the menu, and though the way the restrictions were, I really had to pay attention to people’s needs, because it was really an extension of their home. And that was so great. I learned to enjoy all of the residents. When my babies were born, they all gave me gifts. I mean, it was really a very special place. You know, I got to cook what I wanted in a beautiful environment, and I was home on the weekends, and I was able to have children.

It was the perfect job.”