



PHOTO: KK LAW

# Their Vancouver

Meet Emad and Shannon, building an empire in the local restaurant scene **BY SHERI RADFORD**

Above: Shannon Bosa Yacoub and Emad Yacoub at Black + Blue, one of the Glowbal Group collection of restaurants, which also embraces Coast, Italian Kitchen, Trattoria, The Roof, The Fish Shack and Glowbal Grill, among others

Emad Yacoub thought he was going to become an accountant. It wasn't a burning passion, but he was good with numbers, and in his native Egypt smart kids were expected to go to university. After emigrating to Canada, he started as a dishwasher and quickly worked his way up to chef. Shannon Bosa Yacoub didn't know what her goal in life was, but she took a summer job as a hostess at Joe Fortes Seafood & Chop House, where she met Emad and they fell in love.

In 2002, Emad and Shannon opened Glowbal Grill and Satay Bar.

"The first day, I was in the kitchen until 3:00 in the morning giving them a hand, because we ran out of everything," says Emad. "By the third day, we went from 9 staff to 27, and by the third week we had 40 people and there was a line-up every day."

What began as a single location has grown to a plethora of restaurants in Vancouver, Burnaby and West Vancouver, including the much celebrated Coast, Black + Blue and Italian Kitchen. The biggest one yet, a brand-new Glowbal Grill, is scheduled to open in summer 2015.

Even now, with a staff of almost 1,000, Shannon and Emad still feel like the Mom and Pop of the Glowbal family, jumping in to give advice or bus a table or taste a dish when needed.

According to Shannon, "On any given day, Emad has had probably dozens of spoons stuck in his mouth to try."

They're Mom and Pop at home, too, with a young daughter and son. Juggling work and family life can be a challenge.

"Work is always around, always," says Shannon. "You just have to turn it off sometimes. Not every email needs to be answered immediately."

Life is so busy that they don't get to eat out as often as they might like, but a few of their top choices include Le Crocodile, Yew and Kobe in Vancouver, and Sushi Village, Trattoria di Umberto, Bearfoot Bistro and Rimrock Cafe in Whistler — as well as Zog's Dogs for beavertails. The kids are already discerning diners, able to tell when a steak isn't cooked properly or service isn't up to snuff.

When asked to name the favourite among their own restaurants, Shannon hesitates.

"I really feel like I'm singling out one kid," she says, then confesses a preference for Coast. Emad, however, has no such hesitation.

"The excitement of working on a brand-new project — it's like a new baby. I love it," he says. "If you ask me what's my favourite restaurant, it's always the next one that I'm working on." ■