

FOOD

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CRAIG LEE / The Chronicle

James Faber, chef and co-owner of Delessio, and his wife, Alison, make the family's favorite meat loaf with sons Sam, 8, and Chase and Henry, both 4, at home in San Francisco.

Chef's Night In

Dinnertime, and the gang's all cooking

By Karola Saekel

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

It's so common it's become a cliché — the successful professional chef who discovered the secrets and delights of cooking in grandma's kitchen.

Well, forget that hoary scenario when you deal with James Faber, chef and co-owner of the two DeLessio bakery cafes and markets in San Francisco. He adores his grandmother, with whom he lived for a couple of years in his late teens. A pediatrician, she is a bright, charming woman, he says. Her culinary skills are near nil.

Now grandpa, a banker, is a different story. He was an adventurous and talented cook, as is the chef's father, Peter Faber, whose day job is in the insurance business.

This family tradition of professional men who relish their secondary roles as New England gentleman farmers and cooks made life easier for the young James.

One day, after just one year in college, he marched into his dad's office and told him that continuing a traditional college education would be "a waste of my time and a waste of your money." However, a

► **CHEF'S NIGHT IN:** Page F2

close but gender-blind friendship, which included bumming around Europe together, before romance blossomed. "I finally wore her down," Faber says with a mischievous grin.

DeLessio Market and Bakery, 1695 Market St. (near Gough), (415) 552-5559; and 302 Broderick St. (at Oak); (415) 552-8077; or www.delessiomarket.com.