



## Domagoj Bakija

December 1, 1941 - May 31, 2025

Domagoj Bakija passed away at home in Jupiter, Florida on May 31, 2025. He was 83 years old.

He was born December 1, 1941 to Marija "Milka" Jurićin Bakija and Marijan Bakija in

Pakoštane, a small village in Yugoslavia (now Croatia) on the Dalmatian Coast, near Zadar.

Domagoj was the youngest of five children. His older siblings were Ante, Perina, Berislav, and

Ruja. They grew up along the Adriatic Sea during a difficult time for the country, though

Domagoj would often note that his village later became a popular tourist destination hosting a

Club Med. As a child, he was part of a brief generation that was pushed to learn Esperanto, and

he also became fluent in German and several other languages, in addition to his native Croatian.

After completing hotel management school in Opatija, Croatia, where he was trained as a chef,

he was admitted to university. But when he hesitated to accede to a demand that he join the

communist party, his admission to university was rescinded, and he was sent notice that he was being conscripted into the military. So he escaped westward out of the country, travelling first through Italy and then to France, where he spent a brief time in jail as an unauthorized immigrant. Domagoj later insisted he ate the best bread of his life in that French jail. He was sponsored by a local connection, released, and given work, but soon Domagoj moved on to launch what would become his lifelong career in cooking. He next worked as a waiter and sous chef in restaurants in Paris, and grew his French cooking techniques for making mother sauces, stocks, and much more. In 1964, with the help of a French Catholic charity, he emigrated to the United States, was granted asylum, and settled in New York City, where his first cooking job was at the World Fair. He went on to work in the kitchens of several famous restaurants in the city, including the Four Seasons and the Plaza Hotel. One day while skating at Wollman Rink in Central Park, Domagoj helped a woman up who had fallen on the ice. That woman, Anita Klepacki, originally of Dumont, NJ, became his wife on October 22, 1967, and they remained married until his death, nearly 58 years later. His skills in the kitchen convinced leadership at the Sands Point Golf Club on Long Island to persuade Domagoj to head up their growing high-end food service."Chef

Dom" as he was perhaps best known, worked, lived, and raised his three children, Jon, Peter, and Mary, on the golf course. In 1979, he became a naturalized US citizen. He cared greatly about making sure his children got the university education he was denied, and worked hard to support all three of his children as they went on to earn college and graduate degrees. His children were also frequently subjected to his favorite idiosyncratic aphorisms, such as "grow up straight like tree," and "learn baby learn, earn baby earn." In 2007, he retired from Sands Point Golf Club, after nearly 40 years working in that kitchen, at which point he and Anita moved to Jupiter. Chef Dom attended St. Peter Catholic Church in Jupiter, and he volunteered at El Sol during St. Peter's volunteer days.

Domagoj "Chef Dom" Bakija is survived by his wife, Anita; his son Jon and wife, Rebeccah Kamp; his son Peter and wife, Caitlin Finlay; his daughter Mary; his grandchildren Miriam and Jude; his sister Ruja; and many beloved cousins, nieces, and nephews. He greatly valued his years of friendship with Trish and Trevor McDonald and their daughters, Ashleigh and Caitlin; and those dear individuals who helped him so consistently in Jupiter. A memorial service will be held at Taylor and Modeen Funeral Home, in Jupiter, FL, on Thursday,

June 12th, and will begin promptly at 3:30pm.

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

JUN 12. 3:30 PM (ET)

Taylor & Modeen Funeral Home  
250 Center Street  
Jupiter, FL 33458  
(561) 744-2030  
<https://www.taylorandmodeenflorida.com>

# Tribute Wall

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“*Domagoj was cousin to my father, Srečko, who still remembers the day he was born. They grew up together in Pakoštane as part of the large extended Bakija clan, many of whom eventually found their way to New York. Although Domagoj was my father’s cousin, he and Anita always felt more like an uncle and aunt to us.*

*Some of my favorite childhood memories are from days spent at their home in Sands Point, surrounded by good food and good company. Every visit was full of warmth, laughter, and of course, wonderful meals. “Chef Dom’s” legendary Christmas dinners were five-star feasts (at the kids’ table too!) and cookouts on so many long summer evenings were just as memorable.*

*I know I speak for my father and sister as well when I say we’ll always remember Domagoj with love and gratitude, and we’re holding Anita, Jon, Peter, and Mary in our hearts.*  
*-Marianne, Srečko, and Caroline Bakija*

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**Marianne Bakija** - June 09, 2025 at 11:25 AM

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“*1 file added to the tribute wall*



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**taylor and modeen** - June 06, 2025 at 03:03 PM