

AGENT PROFILE



Auggie Wilms

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If you're looking for an agent who really knows how to combine the ingredients of a good real estate deal, talk to Auggie Wilms. A former chef, Wilms has spent two decades combining interesting ingredients with the same talent and skill that he now brings to his real estate activity.

It almost sounds like the setup for a joke, right? "A chef walks into a real estate office..." But it's no joke, and it actually began 25 years ago with the chef's mother. In 1985, Berkeley Hills Realty co-owner Nancy Mueller helped Wilms's mom Barbara Clark buy a house on Pine Street in Berkeley. Two years ago—a quarter-century later—Nancy did the same for Auggie, helping him buy a house on Monterey Avenue. Wilms says the experience was so positive that he decided to go into real estate himself.

Wilms has lived and worked here all his life, and has a wealth of knowledge about the local real estate scene. "I'm good with people, and I bring tremendous energy to my work," he says. "As in cooking, my focus is on getting the job done, and doing it right."

Aside for a brief foray to Los Angeles, Wilms is Bay Area born and raised. But after graduating from Berkeley High, he set his sights on the Big Apple and enrolled in New York's famed French Culinary Institute. Along with slicing and dicing, Wilms learned a valuable life lesson: the importance of doing the job right. "They were very strict at the school," he says. "You follow a classic recipe, and you don't mess with it."



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Returning to the Bay Area in 1987, Wilms started his two decades of pleasing local palates. Among other places, he worked as a sous chef at Masa's in San Francisco and at Lalime's in Berkeley. In 1994, he started a business smoking seafood for local restaurants, the Ohlone Smoke Company in Emeryville. In one unusual job, he smoked fish for Tsar Nicoulai Caviar in Sacramento. "The caviar business was fascinating," says Wilms. "Tsar Nicoulai even raises its own sturgeon."

Ohlone Smoke scored a major hit in a taste competition in December 2001 sponsored by the San Francisco Chronicle. "We beat everybody," says Wilms, "including companies much larger than ours." Wilms says he still hands out samples of smoked fish to his present-day clients. "I give them a small package with my card stapled to it."

The next few years brought a series of momentous turning points for Wilms. He sold Ohlone Smoke Company, got divorced, bought his Monterey Avenue home, and hung up his chef's toque for good. "It was time for a change," he says simply.

But why go into real estate? How does a person move to escrows from escargots?

Wilms argues that his career switch isn't as strange as it seems. "I've always been interested in building and architecture," he says, "and I'm a hands-on kind of guy. I've done a lot of work on my own house, everything from going attending zoning meetings to nailing up sheetrock."

In addition, Wilms has lived and worked here all his life, and has a wealth of knowledge about the local real estate scene. "I'm good with people, and I bring tremendous energy to my work," he says. "As in cooking, my focus is on getting the job done, and doing it right."