



**Fernando Batista and Barbara Moon.**  
As Batista Moon Studios, they've justly  
earned the reputation of one of the  
most highly regarded Monterey  
Peninsula photographic brands.

*Photo: Kelli Uldall*



# Elevating Commercial Images into Art

40 Years of Experience  
at Batista Moon Photography

BY MICHAEL CHATFIELD

For more than four decades, when compelling images are needed by magazine editors, restaurant owners, advertising agency executives and produce, wine and hospitality industry marketing professionals, the name at the top of many lists is Batista Moon Studio Photography. The husband-and-wife team of Fernando Batista and Barbara Moon has compiled a solid and enviable track record of translating their clients' vision into stunningly crisp, impeccably lit photographs that capture the spirit of whatever product or location they're shooting.

Lately, Batista and Moon have broadened their horizons, adding to their commercial work an increasing portfolio of fine art photography and a passion for teaching the photographic skills they've accumulated over the years.

Though the two are virtually inseparable now, the odds of them having met at all are mind-bogglingly astronomical. Batista grew up in Brazil. After a stint in Buffalo, New York, his interest in photography led him to Santa Barbara, where he hoped to gain admission to the highly regarded photography program of the Brooks Institute. Unable to afford the Institute's tuition, he supported himself working at a variety of jobs, including as a gardener at the school he hoped to attend.

"One day, I met Barbara's sister in Santa Barbara," Batista recalls. "She said, 'I'm going to Monterey to see my mom. Want to come along?' Of course, I did, and subsequently I met Barbara."

"He proposed to me on our first date," Moon says with a laugh.

They married on May 4, 1975.

Moon shared her new husband's passion for photography—having earned a Bachelor's degree in the field—and was mentored by the late master photographer Al Weber. It was only natural that they pool their interests and talents, so they started to turn their passion into an avocation. The first commissions they accepted were shooting photos of



(left) The 1980 Monterey Jazz Festival poster was the first to feature a photograph, based on the Festival's logo. (above) Batista and Moon; 1988 self-portrait.

homes for the Multiple Listing Service and a catalog for the Golden Crucible foundry in Carmel Valley.

"We had to borrow a friend's 35mm Minolta camera at first," Moon says. They learned their craft on the fly and acquired equipment and film on credit. Their darkroom in those days was in a barn, and wasn't particularly lightproof. "We couldn't process film there during the day," Batista says. "That made it hard to make deadlines."

Batista Moon's reputation for providing distinctive, quality work grew and the duo were awarded increasingly high-profile work, including images for the official Monterey Jazz Festival posters in the early 1980s and work for Royal Viking. One day, a call came in from the Brooks Institute to inquire about using their work in a commercial photography exhibit.

"I was blown away," Batista says. "They had been following our work."

Another project they're particularly proud of is the work they did on "50 Years of Shake Family Traditions & Treasured Recipes," a cookbook commissioned by Monterey restaurateur Chris Shake.

"That was one of our most memorable experiences," Moon recalls. The body of work Batista Moon has produced is vast, but its consistency is remarkable. This team has always brought a fine art sensibility to their commercial work.

"Barbara was trained as a fine art photog-



An outtake from a cookbook photo shoot: "We never pass up an opportunity to study light and create still life as an art form. This shot was one we did as a personal challenge."



**(above)** A Batista shot made during a workshop in Ireland, 2013. **(right)** Chili Prawns with Linguini. Batista Moon's reputation for food photography is unparalleled.

rapher," Batista says.

That esthetic has served them well, proving that the two disciplines are not mutually exclusive. Theirs is a highly collaborative approach.

"We each have different strengths," Batista says. "We let the one who is strongest in a particular area take the lead. Some days I'm on top of it and vice versa. We pull each other up to meet a challenge. Clients sometimes ask, 'Who pushed the shutter button?' We'd be hard-pressed to answer."

As do many professionals, Moon and Batista find passing on their skills to others highly rewarding and a natural fit.

"I applied to Pacific Grove Adult School as a teacher in 2007," Moon says. "I found out that I'm a really good teacher."

The couple also leads workshops, taking students on trips to Virginia City, Nevada, along Route 66 and to Ireland.

"Most who take these workshops are Baby Boomers—older students who have the time and the money to pursue their passion," Batista explains.

Moon adds, "These days, we are constantly juggling our commercial and teaching lives."

For more information and additional images, visit [www.batistamoon.com](http://www.batistamoon.com).

