

For Hotel, Resort, and Casino Food & Beverage Professionals

Hotel F&B Executive

MAY/JUNE 2005

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**OUT OF
THE BLUE**
Genuine Menus at IHG's Hotel Indigo

In Indigo's Golden Bean, from left, Gabriele Webster, In-Keeper; Lesley Maxwell, lead Inter-tainer; and Jim Anhut, senior VP brand development, InterContinental.

Enter your signature cocktails in the 2005 MIXIE Awards Hotel Cocktail Competition! p.46

BEVERAGE POTPOURRI

BY DAVE STEADMAN



Dave Steadman

■ SPRING SIGNATURE SERIES

Willapa Bay Oysters paired with Champagne Veuve Clicquot La Grande Dame 1996 and Peppered Grouper Filet paired with Champagne Veuve Clicquot Rose' Reserve 1998 were just two of the servings when the Woodlands

Resort and Conference Center, located just outside Houston, launched its Signature Series events in March, with a Champagne and Harley Dinner.

"The Signature Series dinners offer an elegant evening of fine dining, following a red carpet reception where our guests can view top-of-the-



The Woodlands Resort initiates its Signature Series with a Champagne and Harley Dinner.

line luxury vehicles while mingling with guest celebrities," says Executive Chef John Brazie. "Priced at \$100 ++ per person, it is an excellent value and offers a tantalizing taste of the fine dining offered in our Glass Menagerie Restaurant.

On this evening, every guest received a copy of the best-selling book, *French Women Don't Get Fat*, and chatted with the author, Mirielle Guilano, president/CEO of Veuve Clicquot, as she autographed each book.

There were also many oohs and ahs at the array of Harley Davidsons on the floor.

"This was an overwhelming success," adds F&B Director Mike Maruca. "Press coverage and word of mouth has created a sell-out situation for the next two events in this Spring series."

The World of Wine

BY FRED TIBBITTS



Fred Tibbitts, the Globetrotting Wine Guy

To learn about Ritz Carlton's wine program, Fred Tibbitts speaks with Erich Steinbock, VP, Food & Beverage for the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, L.L.C.

FT: How do you set the standard and tone for your U.S. Wine Program? Is it the same for the international markets, or do you build flexibility into the standards?

ES: We spend much time defining the needs of our guests. There are the must-have, well-known brands and the cutting-edge products that aim for the more adventurous. We have to offer both. It is a little simpler to set the U.S. program than the international one due to consistent availability and fairly consistent product preferences.

FT: Is your program similar to the Marriott Gold Standard Program or are they entirely different? Do you share any of the support services with the Marriott Program in the U.S. or for the international markets?

ES: We have used some of the structure of the Marriott Gold Standard program. However, our products tend to be geared more to the luxury market. We share information and resources with our parent company, yet we do maintain autonomy.

FT: Is the trend toward larger and more complete by-the-bottle wine lists or are the bottle lists shrinking as the by-the-glass lists grow?

ES: We do not take an across-the-board approach on the wine programs. Wine lists and wine-by-the-glass decisions are driven by the desires of our guests, which we interpret into restaurant concepts. Different concepts demand different wine programs.

FT: Do you encourage half-bottles or do you feel that an extensive by-the-glass list is the best approach? How do you handle Room Service, by the glass versus half-bottles?

ES: We have seen a slightly higher demand for half bottles. Wine-by-the-glass programs continue to increase in size and variety.



Erich Steinbock

FT: Do you rely on your wine partners or the Sommelier at each Ritz-Carlton to ensure proper wine training of the staff?

ES: We combine the efforts of both. Our sommelier's key function is the education of our ladies and gentlemen in beverage knowledge. At times he/she reaches out for suppliers to assist.

FT: What will be your wine legacy at Ritz-Carlton?

ES: The ladies and gentlemen serving our guests have a great understanding of what our guests prefer and have the knowledge to recommend the proper beverage with (or without) a meal with confidence.

Wine lists and **WINE-BY-THE-GLASS** decisions are driven by the desires of our guests . . .

FT: What are your favorite wines and why?

ES: There are different occasions to drink wines. I prefer to match them accordingly. It is difficult to find a "bad" glass of wine. When we travel to our hotels we love to drink the local wines or match the food with the chef's favorite wine. Chances are high that those matches work best. Our company has a rich history in food and beverage beginning with Cesar Ritz and Escoffier. Any wine that brings this history to life is near to our hearts (and palates). Marnier Lapostolle helped launch our name by providing funds for the Ritz in Paris. Thus Casa Lapostolle from Chile is a sentimental favorite (besides being delicious). We also feature Ritz Champagne at our hotels.

FT: Do you think in terms of "New World" and "Old World" wines? If so, what do you find are the Ritz-Carlton guests' preferences for Asia-Pacific?

ES: Our guests are traveling the world and are very educated about wine. Geographic preferences are not as prevalent as they used to be, and our guests have become more adventurous with their selections. The "New and Old World" definitions have become less important. ☺

Fred Tibbitts, senior vice president, Fred Tibbitts & Associates Inc., is the foremost global wine-by-the-glass consultant, working with on-premise chains around the world.