

G R E A T C H E F S O F B O S T O N

The Café at the Taj's Sea Bass

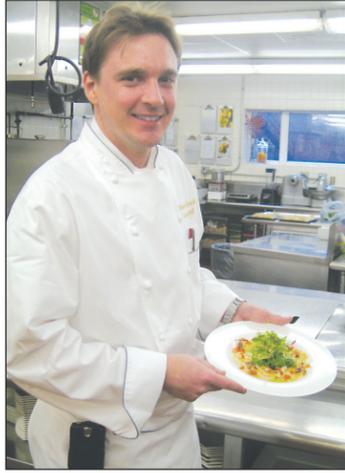
by **Clint Hamblin**

Dinner at The Café at the Taj Hotel could possibly be the most civilized and privileged dining experience one can have in Boston. A sense of unpretentious elegance begins the moment the valet takes your car and you enter this glorious space.

As you move through the revolving doors at 15 Arlington Street, a member of the Taj staff greets and accompanies you to the restaurant where the charismatic maitre d' Alfonso DeLucia welcomes you to The Café. Like a treasured family friend, DeLucia quickly arranges for your coats to be checked, asks how you are doing and, before you reach your table, shares at least two amusing stories of days gone by in this former Ritz-Carlton hotel.

The dining room decor is elegant and cheerful with a perfect pink rose on every table. The lighting expertly emphasizes the architectural highlights of the decor. Each table is fully lit, allowing for effortless viewing of the menu and the beautifully plated food. Like spirits of a bygone era, the mature Café staff floats to and from your table occasionally engaging in a fascinating conversation about this historic hotel.

The Taj has recently acquired executive chef Franck



Executive chef Franck Steigerwald

Steigerwald. Hotel General Manager David M. Gibbons said, "We stopped interviewing chefs when we met Franck Steigerwald. We knew that he was the man with the appropriate talent for The Café."

And Gibbons' choice was right on. Steigerwald has reshaped The Café's menu, combining New England flavors with a delicate mix of Italian and French influences. The partnership of Steigerwald and The Café is truly a winning combination.

"I was born in Italy," waiter Gianfranco Verri proudly proclaimed as he served us a delectable Scallop Salad featuring Plancha Seared Sea Scallops with Fresh Herbs Salad, Salmon

Caviar and Raspberry Vinaigrette along with a Salmon Tartar served with Basil and Lime Zest, Extra Virgin Olive Oil and Yuzu (Japanese citrus flavor) Vinaigrette. When food is presented so beautifully, it's difficult to begin deconstructing the dish, but once you start, it's even more difficult to stop as you "ooh" and "ahh" through each bite.

A special dish of Winter Black Truffle Risotto with Dry Aged Parmesan arrived. The richness of the truffle was perfectly restrained by the risotto and spiked by the Parmesan accents.

Imagine Roasted Beef Tenderloin with Potato Mousseline, Seared Foie Gras and Madeira Sauce. The tenderloin and the slice of rich Foie gras was tender enough to be cut with a fork. The simple potato mousseline was the perfect accompaniment for this tasty combination.

Pastry chef Susan Lagalle offers a Caramelized Apple Napoleon with Sable Cookie, Mascarpone Crèmeux, Sautéed Apples, and Apple Brandy Reduction for dessert. A cool alternative is a Selection of Homemade Ice Creams and Sorbets featuring Vanilla Bean, Chocolate, Strawberry, and Coffee Ice Cream with Raspberry, Lemon and Mango Sorbet. What better way to end an impeccable dinner?



Crispy Mediterranean Sea Bass

Without a doubt Steigerwald's Crispy Mediterranean Sea Bass, Tomato Compote and Basil Lobster Sauce hits the mark. The crispy fish tops a diced tomato compote all surrounded by a rich basil lobster sauce.

Elegant to look at and surprisingly easy to make, Steigerwald's sea bass could easily become a family recipe, so get your scissors – you'll want to cut out this recipe and save it.

Crispy Mediterranean Sea Bass (Serves 1)

Ingredients

- 6 ounces loup de mer filet (sea bass)
- Olive oil
- 1 tablespoon chopped mixed herbs including basil, tarragon

- and mint
- Micro herbs
- 2 tablespoons of tomato compote
- 2 ounces lobster sauce

Tomato Compote

- 1 tablespoon sliced garlic
- 2 tablespoons chopped onions
- 1 tablespoon chopped red pepper
- 4 tablespoons tomato concassee (skinned, deseeded tomato pulp finely chopped)

Lobster Sauce

- 4 lobster heads
- 1 diced onion
- 1 diced red pepper
- 1 diced fennel
- 1 diced beef tomato
- 1 bottle of port wine
- 6 star anise
- 1 quart of water

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