

THE *Gold* STANDARD



An ambitious wine list and
William Bradley's cuisine
take San Diego's Addison
to great heights

BY JOHN MARIANI

THIS PAGE: MARSHALL WILLIAMS; OPPOSITE: ETHAN PINES



This page: The filigreed entrance to the Addison hints at the elegance inside. Opposite: Among chef William Bradley's typically direct and balanced dishes is this one of black bass with ginger-lemon jam, toasted almond puree and wild rocket.

WHAT KIND OF RESTAURANT DOES \$15 MILLION GET YOU THESE DAYS? Quite a spectacular

one, especially when it features a wine list on its way to becoming world-class and boasts the new Grand Del Mar resort in San Diego as its location to compete with other high-end Southern California resorts such as the Inn at Rancho Santa Fe, the Lodge at Torrey Pines, and Rancho Valencia.

But Addison restaurant at the Grand Del Mar trumps all these by having one of the brightest young chefs in America, William Bradley, 31, whose training at Loews Coronado Bay Resort's Azura Point and Mary Elaine's at the Phoenician in Scottsdale, Ariz., prepped him for the elegantly appointed dining room he now services at Addison.

I first raved about Bradley's food at his previous venue: Vu at the Hyatt Regency in Scottsdale, where he focused on using just three ingredients for each dish in a remarkable balance of color, form and taste. At Addison, Bradley keeps close to that ideal, stressing simplicity as a way of getting to the essence of his ingredients.

The design of the Grand Del Mar echoes the flamboyant work of architect Addison Mizner, who built the lavish, Mediterranean-style hotels and resort communities of Palm Beach and Boca Raton, Fla., in the 1920s, rife with archways and rotundas, colored tiles and wrought iron, parquet floors and heavy wood beams, flowered terraces and garden fountains. At Grand Del Mar, there are three wine-themed meeting rooms and a private dining area in the resort's wine cellar, and you can even hold an event aboard a replica of Yacht America, which won the 1851 America's Cup.

Addison's interior design begins with Venetian-plaster walls in yellow and ochre, stone flooring, carved columns and four huge limestone fireplaces. Iron-and-glass doorways trimmed with 22-karat-gold accents open onto a foyer with a 20-foot-high pyramid-shaped ceiling and lead to the library, a book-lined lounge, and a bar-lounge with a stone-topped, handcrafted wood bar. At the entrance to the dining room, you are graciously received by maître d' Christian Ihm.

The windows of the 80-seat main dining room look onto the greens of the Tom Fazio-designed golf course, and having cocktails under the arched terrace is a capital way to begin the evening. Table settings are all first-class, with soft linens, and china by Rosenthal and Bernardaud. There is a secluded area that features a chef's table, which seats up to 12 people, and a flat-screen TV monitor with a live feed from the kitchen, so that guests can observe the cooks as they prepare the tasting menu.

JESSE RODRIGUEZ, 32, FORMERLY OF THE FRENCH LAUNDRY, oversees the wine program and the wine room, which is clad in



San Diego native William Bradley emphasizes simplicity and refinement in his Mediterranean- and European-influenced treatment of California ingredients.



The Addison dining room echoes the Spanish Revival style of the surrounding resort.

limestone and carved stone. The room is viewable from the dining room through a triple arch with glass panes. Rodriguez has built a cache of nearly 2,000 selections and more than 16,000 bottles; it won a *Wine Spectator* Best of Award of Excellence this year. Riedel Vinum and Riedel Sommelier stemware are used exclusively.

"Tom Voss [president of Manchester Grand Resorts] gave me carte blanche to be creative with the list," says Rodriguez. "My contacts from the French Laundry have allowed me to get older vintages and build verticals. The half-bottle list is a mirror of all the categories of the bottle list, from Champagnes to dessert wines,

and I change the wines by the glass [60 selections are offered at a time] every two or three weeks so that regulars can come to the bar and taste something brand new. We are also rapidly expanding our large-format bottle collection."

Among more than 100 half-bottle selections you'll find Mouton-Rothschild 1961 (\$2,660) and two vintages of Araujo Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Eisele Vineyard: 1999 (\$490) and 2003 (\$245). Categories are "boxes within boxes," so that under American whites you'll find "Floral and Exotic," like Scholium Project Naucratis Verdelho 2006 (\$50). There are verticals of California bottlings from Bond, Peter Michael, Pahlmeyer, Crocker & Starr, Screaming Eagle and many others, scores of German and Austrian wines and all the Bordeaux top growths. Rodriguez believes that Bradley's food is "conducive to wine flavors because the dishes' flavors are not too complex. I particularly think they go well with Burgundies, so I have a huge number of those on the list."

I readily understand Rodriguez's point. Bradley's food is not extremely spicy, nor is it fussed up with lots of different sauces and condiments; there are no experiments in molecular cuisine nor durian-flavored ice creams. Bradley, who makes a keen attempt to "master simplicity and intensity," says that his cooking is "driven not by trends, but by the history of food" and a respect for European and Mediterranean traditions that fit well with California ingredients. This is best expressed in his five-course tasting menu with wine, which might begin with seared sea scallops in a saffron-celery sauce, paired with a Weingut Bles Ferber Riesling Spätlese Trittenheimer Apotheke 2005 (\$50). Morel mushrooms are served with a touch of *moutarde d'Orleans* and garlic roasted with maple, while a Hass avocado parfait comes with a red-pepper puree, topped with Parmigiano fondue.

Bradley seems to have developed a new fondness for sweetness, which can sometimes compromise a dish, as in the case of a silky white corn velouté laced with clover honey and rosemary that is much too assertive. Subtle sweetness worked, however, as in his maple-roasted pork with a pine nut puree, onion soubise and caramelized chicory, whose bitterness is a good counterpoint. A reduction of cider provided a novel and quite wonderful underpinning for juicy, baked sole with a fricassee of morels and baby turnips. So too did lamb *crépinette* with a parsley puree



Lamb loin with wood sorrel is served with a slice of plum tart and chèvre sauce.



Sommelier Jesse Rodriguez has opened with a versatile wine list that includes more than 100 half-bottles from top producers among its nearly 2,000 selections.

gain just enough tangy-sweetness from onion marmalade.

The kitchen does a classic turn on lamb persillé, served with a warm, Provençal goat's cheese-and-leek tart and a refreshing lemon-sorrel salad. Rodriguez matched the dish with a solid, remarkably complex Aldo Conterno Dolcetto Langhe Il Masante 2003 (\$40).

On the rare occasion that Bradley does add hot seasoning to his cooking, he shows restraint. Case in point: meaty langoustines simply grilled then napped with Thai red curry, coconut and toasted cashews come off more savory and aromatic than blisteringly hot.

There are impeccably maintained cheeses, and desserts follow Bradley's lead by toeing a fairly classic but still imaginative line. Chocolate cake is served with coffee liqueur and caramel candy ice cream, and frozen strawberry-soufflé features sweet-and-sour rhubarb and warm chocolate ganache.

I'm pretty sure that Bradley could turn out food of this caliber from a modestly equipped kitchen anywhere, and I'd be happy to eat it in a bare, minimalist dining room. But when you add in \$15 million of posh, a stellar wine list and the kind of commitment that the owners at the Grand Del Mar have made, you can't help but be dazzled.

Contributing editor John Mariani has been writing for Wine Spectator since 1993.

Addison

The Grand Del Mar, 5200 Grand Del Mar Way, San Diego Telephone (858) 314-1900 Web site www.addisondelmar.com Open Dinner, Tuesday to Sunday Cost Entrées \$37-\$46; tasting menus \$110-\$165 Corkage \$25 Credit cards All major