

WINE DINE &

TRAVEL

PREMIERE ISSUE

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AMSTERDAM

The Windmills of Zaanse Schans

The Anne Frank House

NEW CALEDONIA

COLORADO FOOD DUDES

WALKING HADRIAN'S WALL

GUADALUPE VALLEY WINE COUNTRY

GREAT DESTINATIONS: TRULY GRAND

THE WIZARD OF ADDISON

William Bradley

THE WIZARD OF ADDISON

By Ron James

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someone tells me that the San Diego region doesn't have fine-dining restaurants that compare with San Francisco, Chicago or New York, I point them to a culinary jewel just a long stones throw from Del Mar's sparkling beaches. The place is called Addison at The Grand Del Mar. Since the restaurant opened, it has racked up more prestigious awards than many star chef-owned restaurants.

The maestro in the kitchen is Chef William Bradley. He has wowed San Diegans and visitors with his vision of contemporary French cuisine since the restaurant opened in 2006. Bradley began his career at Azzura Point at Loews Coronado Bay Resort and then moved on to Scottsdale. As executive chef for Vu restaurant at the Hyatt Regency Scottsdale Resort & Spa, he was nominated for the James Beard Award for Rising Star Chef for three consecutive years.

For all the recognition and honors he's received, Bradley is too little recognized

by East Coast food journalists and culinary intelligentsia. Bradley's accomplishments are even more remarkable given that he has no formal training and has labored in a non-major media market in a hotel resort hidden off a freeway between tracts of suburban homes.

The Addison Experience

It begins when you turn off a nondescript suburban boulevard into an almost hidden side street. At this quiet intersection, nondescript ends and grand begins.

The two-lane road winds through the plush acreage of The Grand Del Mar, a luxury-class resort and golf club. Spotlights accent manicured oak and olive trees all the way to the restaurant, where valets bustle and guests waiting for their cars gather by the blazing outdoor fireplace to ward off the evening chill.

Inside the intricate iron and glass doors wait an imposing foyer with golden Venetian plastered walls, a 20-foot high pyramid ceiling and an inlaid limestone and marble floor. The design reflects the style created by the restaurant's namesake, Addison Mizner, a renowned architect who introduced this hybrid Moroccan, Spanish and Venetian



Addison's intricately detailed entryway leads into the elegant dining room and a culinary adventure orchestrated by Chef William Bradley.

style at posh Palm Beach and Boca Raton resorts in the 1920s.

Near the large, full-service bar, a cozy room features a 13-foot tall limestone fireplace.

As we're seated and fine white linen napkins are draped across our laps -- we take a deep breath and look around. Other guests that evening are dressed up (by San Diego standards) and the room buzzes with good cheer and anticipation. There's a mood of celebration in the air.

Addison's dining room is thoughtfully designed. With seating for just 80, the atmosphere is rather intimate and the acoustics are good, despite the tall ceilings and open floor plan. Tables are spaced nicely, and in a way that keeps conversations at the table. Lighting is soft and low, but thanks to unobtrusive spotlights, guests can read the menu and view the dishes without resorting to the table candle or a cell phone light.

"If you've never tried sweet-breads, this version will make you a fan"

The restaurant offers a choice of fixed-price menus featuring absolutely fresh and, when possible, locally grown ingredients. The menus are seasonal. A sample menu posted on Addison's website (www.addisondelmar.com) lists dishes currently being served.

The Four-Course Prix-Fixe Menu, priced at \$98, offers guests choice selections for each course. There is also a cheese cart featuring 10 choice cheeses from California, Wisconsin, Italy and France.

Also available is The Gourmand 10-Course-Menu for \$235 per person. If you want an memorable treat, as we did, Bradley will create a special seven course Carte Blanche meal "for the table," priced at \$175 per person (add wine pairing for an additional \$125 per person).

I like a "chef's choice" menu because it both is a good gauge of the chef's range and culinary mastery, and offers a rich variety of flavors, textures and artistic plating. In short, it's a feast for the eyes and palate.

Before the first course, we were served an amuse-bouche of smoked salmon rillettes with cornichons and yuzu, a tasty mouthful presented like a tiny jewel. Those with big appetites may think they crave more, but



patience, my hungry friends; you will walk out of Addison full and satisfied.

The next two courses spotlighted seafood. Up first were layers of thinly sliced Australian hiramasa served with pickled cucumbers, pears and uni, an arrangement of vividly contrasting textures accented with fruity sweetness and ocean-fresh salinity.

Alaskan king crab starred in the second course. Crab is my favorite seafood, but I tend to avoid Alaskan king crab because it often disappoints. Chef Bradley changed my thinking with the first bite - sweet, flavorful and so tender it melted in my

mouth. The accompanying aioli and cured lemon emulsion were perfect foils for this succulent delicacy.

Our next dish, ris de veau (veal sweet-breads) was lightly crusted to preserve the delicate flavor, and served with toasted pistachios, amaretto and prunes. This dish again balanced sweet and savory notes, proving Bradley's mastery of this impressive high-wire act. If you've never tried sweetbreads, this version will make you a fan.

After the artisan cheese course, we refreshed our palates with a crisp granite

(ice) of lemon-honey and apple cider before moving on to dessert.

When you're celebrating, there's always room for dessert and at Addison, the expertly prepared sweets aren't to be missed. We savored tender warm almond cake with a tangy berry gastrique and crème fraîche sorbet, a beautiful plate created by the pastry chef team.

From amuse-bouche to dessert, Addison's service was world-class. The expert staff, presented and cleared each course deftly. Polished but not the least bit pompous, the staff was friendly without being familiar.

Each course of our chef's menu was solidly matched with a wine selected by the Sommelier who described the wine and pairing in detail. Both tap the amazing resources in Addison's 37,000-bottle wine cellar, a collection that has garnered a slew of accolades.

The Sommelier is as adventurous with his wine choices as Bradley is with food. The only American wine poured was a Schramsberg, Brut "Blanc de Blancs," presented with the amuse-bouche. Then we were taken on a global wine adventure, sampling a slightly fruity and effervescent Txomin Etxaniz Basque white, a semi-dry German Riesling, a sweet Emilio Lustau "Solera" sherry and a full-bodied Montes syrah from Chili. It is worth the money to make this journey.

If you want to bring a bottle from your own cellar to enjoy with dinner, keep in mind that the corkage fee is a very hefty \$50. Any additional bottles you bring must be matched by an equal number of purchased bottles.

Chef Bradley challenges himself and his staff to embrace each season's freshest local ingredients. His fall tasting menus will include: Parfait de Poulard with quince gelée and cinnamon brioche; Sea scallops with cauliflower, caviar and celery; Petit Crevettes with matsutake mushrooms, water chestnuts and dashi; Ris de Veau Panés with smoked pecans, parsnips and sauce perigéux; and Pears Poché with vanilla crèmeux orange and Armagnac.

As the number of fine dining, special occasion restaurants dwindles in cities across America, Addison must be celebrated for staying the course and offering the memorable setting, menu and service expected of world-class restaurants. The dining experience produced by Bradley and his team certainly adds weight to the argument that San Diego is, indeed, a culinary destination.

I recently admonished a young restaurant reporter for using too many lofty superlatives in restaurant profiles. Wait, I explained, until you find a restaurant truly worthy of such high praise. Addison's dining experience was worthy, and in fact, it was grand. ■



Chef William Bradley's

BAKED DOVER SOLE WITH LEMON- LIME JAM AND FINES HERBES



INGREDIENTS

- 6 whole lemons, peeled, seeded and cut in half**
- 6 whole limes, peeled, seeded and cut in half**
- 4 cups lemon Perrier sparkling water**
- 3 cups organic cane sugar**
- ¼ cup fresh ginger, diced**
- Four 4-ounce Dover sole fillets**
- Fleur de sel (sea salt) to taste**
- ¾ cup salted French butter, tempered**
- 2 leaves each Fines Herbes for garnish (tarragon, chives, chervil and parsley)**
- 4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil**

Method for Lemon-Lime Jam

In a heavy-duty saucepot over low heat, add lemons, limes, sparkling water, sugar and ginger. Cook uncovered for one hour, stirring occasionally.

Method for Sole

Season each fillet of sole with salt. In a large piping bag, add the tempered butter and pipe over each individual fillet until completely coated. Place sole in a preheated 200-degree oven for 8 minutes. Then, remove and let stand for 5 minutes.

Assembly

On each serving plate, place one individual fillet of sole and arrange Fines Herbes on top of each fillet; then spoon over olive oil and sprinkle with fleur de sel. Place a small dollop of Lemon-Lime Jam on the side.