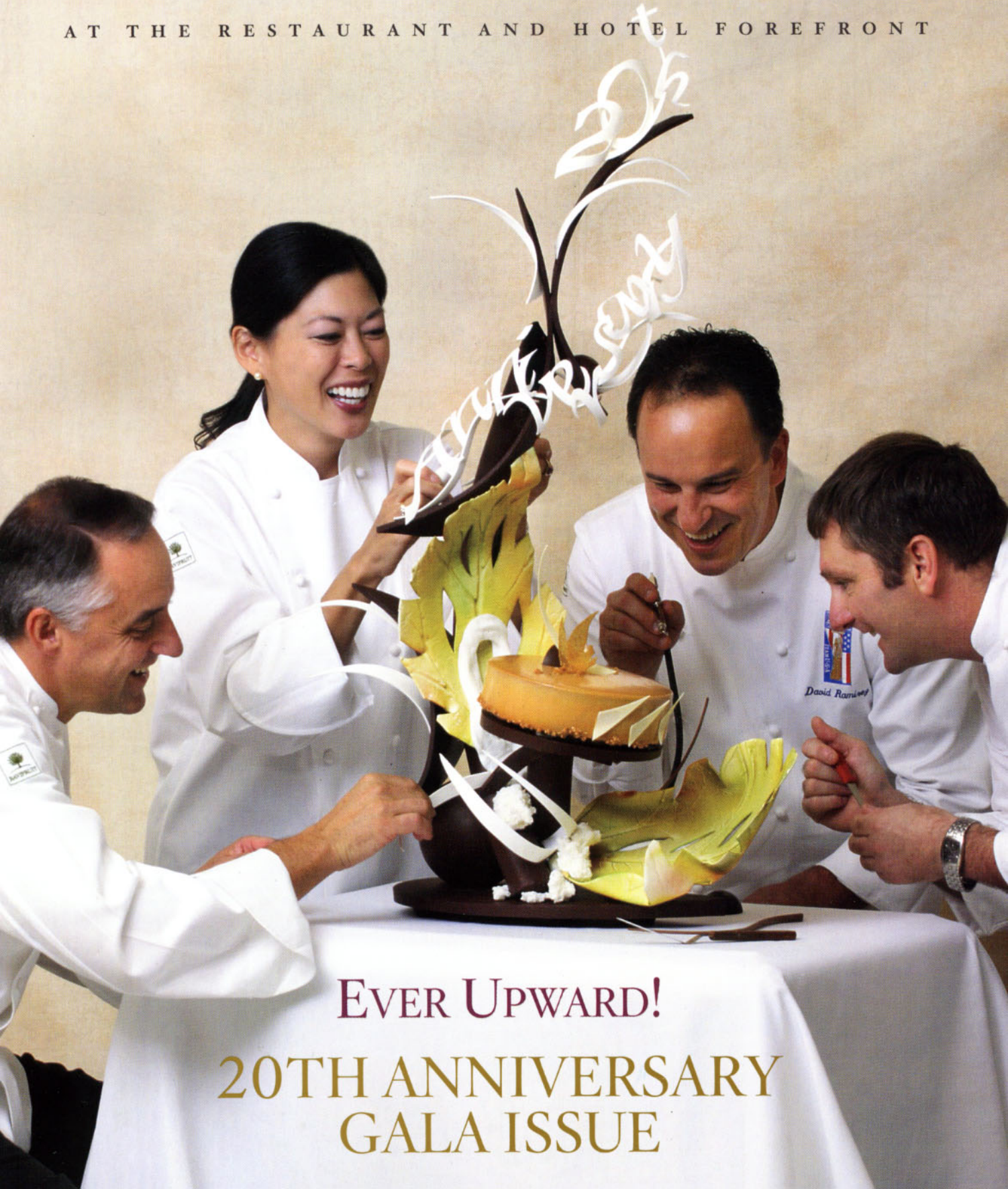


SEPTEMBER 2008

FOOD ARTS

AT THE RESTAURANT AND HOTEL FOREFRONT



EVER UPWARD!

20TH ANNIVERSARY
GALA ISSUE

Birth Announcements

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Providence, Rhode Island What was formerly home to LEpicureo in the **Hotel Providence** was reborn in June as **Aspire**, with a refreshed interior and new menu by **Jennis Heal**, recently of **Hemenway's Seafood Grill & Oyster Bar**. The elegant 140 seat space is enlivened with such glamorous touches as dramatic glass chandeliers that hide coquettishly behind peek-a-boo shades and rich burgundy booths that envelop guests in an intimate cocoon. **APPS** (\$5 to \$19): wild Maine Johnny Blue mussels "New Bedford style" with chorizo, kalamata olives, sweet peppers, tomatoes, and garlic; Maine lobster bisque with sweet Sherry and fresh tarragon. **MAINS** (\$16 to \$42): braised short ribs with stone-ground white polenta, baby green beans, and *gremolata*; pan-seared sea scallops with porcini mushroom ravioli, roasted grape tomatoes, caramelized fennel, and herb broth. **DESSERTS** (\$6 to \$12): layered coffee and cream cake with Kahlúa/caramel sauce and candied espresso beans; bananas Foster for two prepared tableside.

Stowe, Vermont Fueling Vermont's culinary awakening is the June debut of **Solstice**, the signature dining spot seating 160 guests indoors and out at the newly minted **Stowe Mountain Lodge**. The dining room has stunning mountain views, and hand-carved furnishings and custom pottery by local artists lend a rustic touch to the upscale setting. Likewise, a farm-to-table ethos in the kitchen, run by executive chef **Sean Buchanan**, recently of the **Middlebury Inn** (Middlebury, VT), guides the transformation of regional produce, cheeses, and meats into contemporary American fare. **APPS** (\$9 to \$16): grass-fed beef tartare with homemade mustard cream, shaved clothbound cheddar, and herb flatbread crisps; warm parsnip soup with chilled carrot custard, parsnip chips, and rosemary oil. **MAINS** (\$31 to \$37): homemade *tagliatelli* with local duck confit, roasted tomatoes, oyster mushrooms, and sweet-and-sour fennel; apple-brined pork loin with smoked apple butter, apple/rosemary/potato pancake, and braised greens with smoked bacon. **DESSERTS** (\$8): maple crême brûlée with ginger cookies; apple/cranberry crisp with honey gelato.

New York City Marc Forgione, the mohawked 29 year old son of lauded new American chef **Larry Forgione**, whose pedigree includes stints cooking with **Patricia Yeo** and **Laurent Tourondel**, teamed up with **Chris Blumlo** (a seasoned veteran who has worked for **Restaurant Associates** and more recently for food-



The bustling theater district of Providence, Rhode Island, welcomes its newest culinary star, **Aspire**. Photo by Al Weems.

service giant **Aramark**) to unveil **Forge** (134 Reade Street) in June. The dark and handsome space has a worn patinated feel thanks to exposed brick walls, candlelit glass lanterns, and reclaimed wood shelving displaying a carefully curated collection of vintage cookbooks and cookery. Anchoring the 97 seater is an antique cast-iron oven used to warm potato rolls by pastry chef **Jennifer McCoy** (who comes by way of Chicago, where she worked at **Blackbird** and **Bittersweet**). Forgione's menu is unfussy American fare with a youthful playful edge. **APPS** (\$12 to \$18): grilled octopus salad with fresh hearts of palm, almond pesto, and arugula; free-range chicken "nuggets" (breaded and fried shredded chicken thigh confit with poblano chiles, red peppers, and chives) with smoked onion remoulade and local wax beans. **MAINS** (\$26 to \$68): basil crusted halibut with marinated cherry tomatoes and Sorrento lemon olive oil emulsion; suckling pig's leg for two with mustard crushed fingerling potatoes, broccoli raab, and porcini mushrooms. **DESSERTS** (\$9 to \$11): goat cheese *panna cotta* with spiced shortbread and blueberry compote; trio of American classics (root beer float with ginger ice cream, butterscotch pudding with pine nut cookies, and Granny Lu's chocolate cake with cocoa nib tuile).

Santa Fe, New Mexico With an on-site biodynamic garden and French born internationally trained **Charles Dale** at the helm, **Terra** balances farm-to-table principles with Southwestern-accented fine dining. Pastry chef **Kaitlin Ojeda** previously worked with executive pastry chef **Jean Claude Canestrier** at



Paris and Bally's in Las Vegas. Opened in August, Terra is the signature dining venue at **Encantado**, a shiny new **Auberge Resorts** property located on land formerly occupied by Rancho Encantado. New York City-based AvroKO (the team behind the seasonally morphing interiors at New York City's **Park Avenue**) takes as its design touchstones regional Native American influences and Spanish missions, integrating leather, stone, wood, and poured concrete in a 100 seat space. Paralleling the earthy chic interior is a menu Dale describes as "modern rustic," his unfussy yet sophisticated take on local flavors. **APPS** (\$12 to \$24): foie gras "stack" with blue corn pancakes, wild cherries, and dark amber agave syrup; ravioli *verde* with local pistachio pesto in tomato broth. **MAINS** (\$24 to \$38): red Gulf snapper grilled in a corn husk with *huitlacoche* crème and maize soufflé; slow-cooked pork shank with creamy polenta, glazed carrots, and cipollini. **DESSERTS** (\$9 to \$14): Piña Colada (pineapple/banana/coconut mille feuille with Mojito sorbet and almond nougatine); blackberry Charlotte with white chocolate/ yogurt bombe and cassis sauce.

Scottsdale, Arizona The ambitious \$70 million spruce-up of **The Phoenician** includes an ambitious repackaging of executive chef **Paul Carter's** dining venues. In June, The Terrace was transformed into the Italianate **Il Terrazzo**, seating 148 indoors and out, with **Victor Casanova**, who worked at **Neros** (Las Vegas) and Buca Giovanni (San Francisco), as chef de cuisine. Polished nickel accents and upholstered panels on the walls create a warm textured backdrop for a menu focused on artisanal breads, handmade pastas, imported Italian cheeses, and a signature Bellini program by **Ben Hershberger**, the property's master baker. Desserts are courtesy of Phoenician executive pastry chef **Roy Pell**. **APPS** (\$9 to \$24): seared foie gras sliders with strawberries, *nepitella* (an Italian herb with a minty flavor), and balsamic onions on ciabatta crostini with *vin cotto*; grilled squid with fingerling potatoes, wild arugula, black olives, and *salsa rossa*. **MAINS** (\$19 to \$38): handmade gnocchi with wild boar *ragù* and crispy onions; Tuscan seafood stew of squid, clams, shrimp, and mussels with plum tomatoes and Sardinian *fregola*. ■