

Cognoscenti magazine

Because life is short

DIFFERENT POINTE OF VIEW

At the Hilton Pointe Tapatio Cliffs Resort
Phoenix, Arizona

Different Pointe of View is cleverly named. The restaurant sits atop a spectacular promontory offering commanding views of Phoenix's famed Valley of the Sun. But the name is also appropriate in another sense, since it is here that Chef Ivan J. Flowers pushes the envelope of culinary style, giving adventurous diners a glimpse into his very own deliciously iconoclastic point of view.

During a recent dinner there, **Cognoscenti Magazine** editors were fortunate to have Chef Flowers personally introduce and present each dish in an elaborate multi-course tasting menu. Sommelier Eric Spragett, who as Cellar Master also oversees the restaurant's impressive 15,000-bottle collection, presented matching wines.

It was to be an evening of fascinating contrasts.

Lobster Ravioli with spicy cantaloupe *fra diavola* sauce had sweetish elements that worked nicely with a 2001 *Willakenzie Estate* Pinot Gris showing flavors of apple and smoke. In taste and texture, the progression from this dish to the next—a Hudson Valley *foie gras* with chocolate rosemary agnolotti ganache—was outstanding. A 1996 *Royal Tokay* with mint in the nose and berries in the body was matched with the *foie gras*.



Chef Ivan Flowers with some of his succulent culinary creations

The lobster bisque with white truffle shavings was special. “Truffles take to fat,” noted Chef Flowers during one of his tableside appearances—and the result was a soup so extravagantly rich as to be nearly caramelized around the edges of the bowl.

Next, flaming oysters prepared four ways made a flashy appearance at table—although

aesthetically this offering proved rather a flash in the pan. Once the shooting flames had died down, the service platter (covered with rock salt) grew barren and nearly painful to look at.

In the entrées, a rack of milk-fed lamb was served. This perfectly turned classic was enlivened by a dollop of pesto “just for contrast”—another of Chef Flowers’ palate-teasing ideas. Chilean sea bass was served, as it should be, impeccably fresh, just shading over from translucence, and flaking at the mere touch of a fork.

A bottle of excellent 1999 *Lynmar* (Quail Hill) Russian River Valley Pinot Noir displayed huge spice

on the attack, with jammy black cherry fruit concentrations predominating thereafter.

Chef Flowers takes a rigorous and nearly intellectual approach to structuring the dishes he serves. He's "very into mouth feel," aiming for "expansion on the palate." Dining at a fine restaurant should be a series of "little adventures," he believes. To reach the requisite level of excitement, he "will use every sense." So it is that plates at Different Pointe of View are "all white, like a canvas," providing a background on which the chef can freely deploy "all the colors of an artist's palate."



A beautiful view over Phoenix

Our Table Captain, Mark Shuga, completed our evening of rich sensory theatre with Bananas Flambées, which he prepared tableside using brown sugar, cinnamon, citrus and rum. The evening was wrapped in style with snifters of *Osborne* Rare Sherry (Pedro Ximenez), which over the decades had acquired all the richness and unctuousness of dark melted chocolate.

This article was written by Jeffrey Riggs, Senior Contributing Editor to *Cognoscenti Magazine*. Photos courtesy of *Pointe Hilton Resorts*.

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