

# Cognoscenti

## magazine

Because life is short

### THE VENTANA ROOM

At Loews Ventana Canyon Resort  
Tucson, Arizona

The entrance was impeccable: We'd lost track of time, sipping *Veuve Cliquot* champagne in the Loews Ventana Canyon Resort's comfortable downstairs lounge. When seven o'clock came and went, debonaire Maitre D'Hotel Kevin Brady discretely approached us and determined that we were ready to dine. Placing our flutes on a silver tray, he led us up a tall staircase to the resort's signature restaurant, the **Ventana Room**, chatting smoothly all the while—while not a single drop of our champagne was spilt on the tray he so deftly balanced.

Arriving at table, we started to peruse the menu and wine cards. Expansive picture windows ran the length of the restaurant, revealing Tucson's glittering lights below. We noted several appealing touches: a half-dozen clipped roses on each table, stylish wax-reservoir candles, and fitted lumbar pillows placed low on each chair for guest comfort. A Spanish classical guitar player played in front of the fireplace, added to the overall feeling of warmth and elegance.

Service was performed in nearly flawless classical style, with staff anticipating our wishes so thoroughly that we began wondering if they could read our minds! We particularly enjoyed the slightly theatrical way in which Table Captain Anton O'Hagin described each dish. (He later explained, "I'm painting you a picture, the plates are our canvas.")

Early in the meal, basil-infused *escargots* were enhanced by the sweetness of a spectacular white



*The Ventana Room on the top floor of the resort*

truffle honey. *Confit* duck was served in wafer-thin pastry, with apple sauté making the right flavor contrast.

Roasted Kobe beef was a *tour de force*: pan-seared then finished in the oven, the meat was tender and flavorful, with its rich sake-port wine sauce so densely reduced as to resemble a syrup more than a sauce. Roasted California squab melted on the tongue with almost the consistency of *foie gras*—the only reservation was the somewhat crude crust of toast on which it was served.

Notable among the wines, an *Adrian Fog* Anderson Valley Pinot Noir was floral, spicy, and dripping with rich plum notes. A 1998 *Fontanabianca* Barbaresco featured a light nose and pepper, cherry, and caramel on the palate along with a rather unpleasant taste of graphite. The star of the show

was a bottle of *Guigals* 1998 Côte Rôtie Brune et Blonde. Elegant and restrained, this purplish-red wine offered a rich bouquet and plenty of chewy tannins in the body.

With meal's end, Chef Phillippe Trosch joined us at table to chat. The chef—who has a powerful and perhaps quintessentially Gallic personality—seems to be just the man to take the Ventana Room, already Tucson's finest dining establishment, yet another notch higher. "Right now in my cooking, I have a lot of things to say," he told us. And on the night we visited, his dishes were singing in nearly perfect pitch.



*Chef Phillippe Trosch*

This article was written by Jeffrey Riggs and Nicole Medvecky-Riggs, Contributing Editors to *Cognoscenti Magazine*. Photo courtesy of *Loews Ventana Canyon Resort*.

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**Ventana Room**  
**Loews Ventana Canyon Resort**  
7000 North Resort Drive,  
Tucson, AZ 85750  
Phone (520) 615-5494  
[www.loewshotels.com](http://www.loewshotels.com)