

Cognoscenti magazine

Because life is short

THE WIGWAM RESORT Litchfield Park, Arizona

Originally constructed in 1918 as a retreat for Goodyear Tire executives, **The Wigwam** has come a long way. In its early years, “guests were handed a room key and a horse when they checked in,” as General Manager Peter Serra explained to visiting **Cognoscenti Magazine** editors. Today, the resort’s rich history is evident in its classic Mission-style architecture, oversized stitched leather armchairs and charming vintage photographs adorning the property throughout.

The Wigwam’s growth—paralleling that of Arizona’s—is represented in its varied room styles—no fewer 51 different room types can be counted amongst its 331 rooms. Inside, warm woods, quaint checkered fabrics and soft armchairs enhance the homey feel and old-style charm. After an hour or two, you start to feel this is a place where you can *kick back* without having to put on the slightest pretension.

The Wigwam is rather more modest than some other luxury-class lodging establishments in the Phoenix area, yet the property has a soothingly comfortable, residential atmosphere that we really enjoyed. The park-like grounds are adorned with tall palms, impressive swaths of beautifully tended green grass, and attractive, adobe-colored *casitas*. Three golf courses with 54 championship holes attract duffers from around the country. Under **Starwood** management since April 2000, The Wigwam is forging ahead with an ambitious renovation project that will touch nearly every part of the facility by 2003.

The signature **Arizona Kitchen** restaurant is a pretty place in which a ceiling of massive kiva wood log beams, background Flamenco music, an exhibition kitchen with wood-burning oven and hearth fireplace make things

cozy. We liked the waitresses’ Mexican-style flare skirts and the gaily-painted ceramic meal plates. Chef Brad Jenkins dishes up Southwestern cuisine featuring indigenous Sonoran Desert products. However, the kitchen’s tendency to spectacularly pan-flame or



*A relaxing feel
at the Wigwam
Resort*

strongly oil many of the menu offerings left us feeling decidedly heavy afterwards. Smoked corn chowder was quite good, but an “appetizer trio” of blue corn tostada, lobster with ham relleño, and grilled chicken empanada was too crispy and crunchy (read, deep fried) for our tastes. In the main courses, a rack of lamb was merely unexciting, while pan-seared Chilean sea bass was again too oily. The delicate and piquant flavors of exotic regional chilies and spices seemed largely lost to the molting flames of the kitchen. The dining experience needs work before it will match the rest of the resort’s considerable style and charm.

This article was written by Nicole Medvecky-Riggs and Jeffrey Riggs, Contributing Editors to *Cognoscenti Magazine*.

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