



# A Taste of Waldorf / Jean-Georges Beverly Hills

## Waldorf Astoria Beverly Hills

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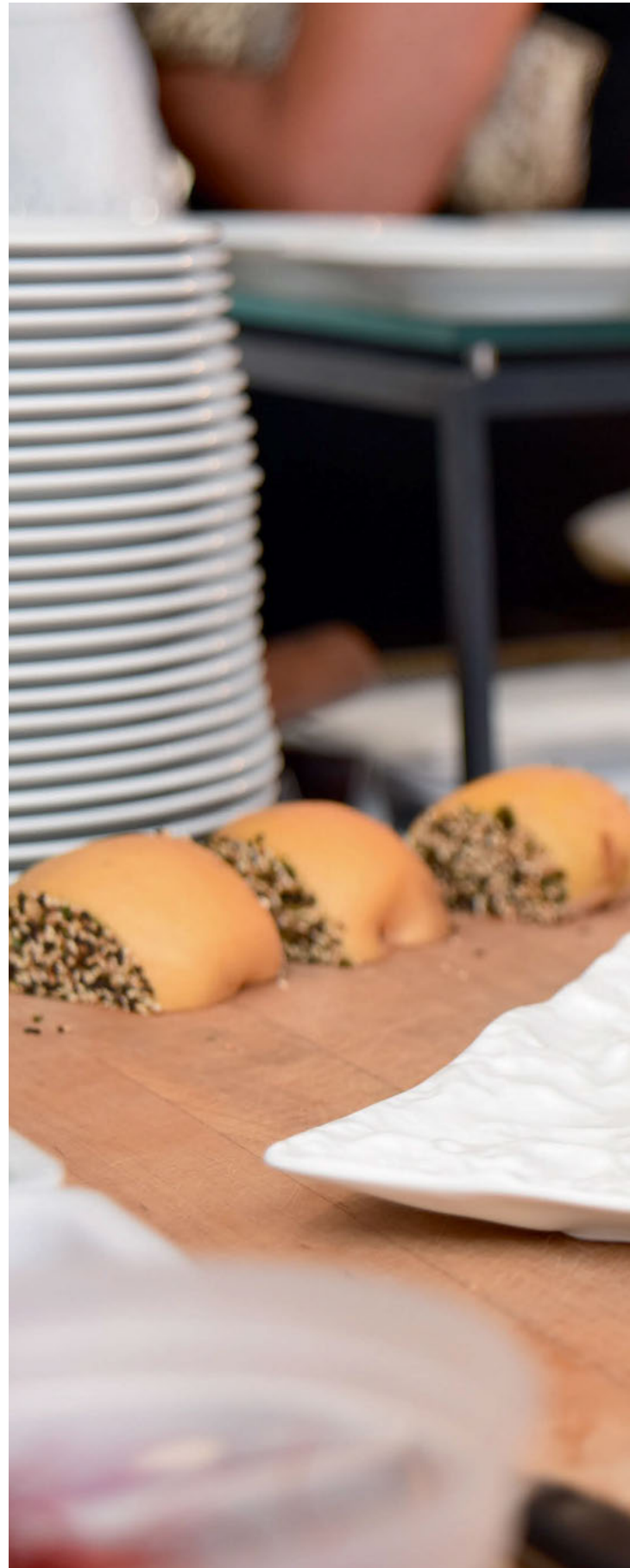
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**T**here are few other hospitality brands in the world quite as synonymous with universally celebrated culinary creations as Waldorf Astoria. From cocktails like the Martini, Rob Roy and Tequila Sunrise, to dishes like red velvet cake, eggs benedict, Thousand Island dressing and the eponymous Waldorf Salad, over the past 120 years the luxury hotel chain and its iconic food and beverage inventions have stood for timeless elegance and sophistication.

So when Waldorf Astoria holds a contest to seek the next new cocktail and dish to enter the ranks of these renowned delicacies, the pressure is on. Add to that a judging panel made up of three-Michelin-starred chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten and food industry heavyweights such as Padma Lakshmi - plus the backdrop of the latest jewel in the Waldorf Astoria crown of hotels - and the recipe for success may just be complete.

This was the scene at the Taste of Waldorf event, hosted by the Waldorf Astoria Beverly Hills hotel in Los Angeles. Bringing together chefs from five Waldorf Astoria hotels around the world, teamed up with five Rising Star finalists from the coveted James Beard Foundation's annual awards, the event formed part of a month-long celebration marking the opening of the stylish new hotel.





Winning dish: beet-cured trout and tempura shrimp



The task this year was no easy feat: the teams of chefs were asked to turn happy hour into the 'Fifth Hour: Bar + Bites', a contemporary update to the time-honoured ritual. The challenge was not only to expand the bar offering beyond traditional drinks and appetisers, by creating two small bites that pair perfectly with an original cocktail and mocktail, but also to incorporate innovative themes that mirror the sophisticated and modern style of each Waldorf Astoria property.

Innovative small plates incorporated delicacies such as foie gras and lobster, with dishes ranging from seared scallops topped with Beluga caviar; to Kobe beef carpaccio with shaved white Alba truffle. Meanwhile Waldorf Astoria bartenders assisted their chefs by creating inventive drinks to match. There was the Supermoon cocktail, featuring squid ink, Paniolo whiskey, pineapple, lemon and vanilla; the Sun King, with passion fruit snow, finger lime caviar, lemon confit and vodka; and the Prommer de Parfum mocktail, featuring gala apple, bergamot essence and cedar tea.

The winning combinations were created by Michael Zachman, executive chef at the Waldorf Astoria Park City in Utah, who had teamed up with James Beard finalist Alex Bois. Their beet-cured trout on sweet potato blini with cucumber, dill and smoked trout roe, matched with Rye & Shine Prosecco with hibiscus and roasted rice; and spicy Togarashi prawn with lime and ginger Yuzu pickled pear, paired with a ginger Yuzu Asian Pear Mojito mocktail will now be featured on menus at 26 Waldorf Astoria properties worldwide. And while an eternal legacy of these new

dishes among the list of famous Waldorf Astoria creations may not be guaranteed, their inventiveness certainly befits the launch of the Waldorf Astoria Hotel Beverly Hills.

A decade in the planning, the \$200m hotel is designed by renowned French architect Pierre-Yves Rochon – whose other projects have included the Four Seasons Hotel in Florence, The Peninsula Shanghai, and The Savoy in London – effortlessly marries contemporary luxury with old Hollywood glamour. Despite its size – the 12-storey hotel features 119 guest rooms and 51 suites – the Waldorf Astoria Beverly Hills holds a unique sense of intimacy, with cosy public areas offering sumptuous respite from the hustle of nearby Santa Monica and Wilshire Boulevards.

The culinary side of the hotel too, reflects a modern interpretation of Waldorf Astoria history. Helmed by Vongerichten, the food and beverage programme not only marks the celebrity, three-Michelin-starred chef's inaugural partnership with Waldorf Astoria but also his first venture on the west coast of the USA.

His offering at the hotel is threefold: there is the bar, comprising a lively yet intimate cocktail lounge, located adjacent to the main, signature restaurant Jean-Georges Beverly Hills; and the Rooftop restaurant and bar on the 12th floor.

The latter's sweeping views of the surrounding hills and the Golden Triangle, including the world-famous Rodeo Drive, are matched by an accessible menu that delivers informal yet elevated small plates.



Avocado carpaccio pizza

Inspired by the flavours of Latin America and Southeast Asia, mixed with California cuisine and a touch of New York flair, it's already a hot spot for locals and serves ubiquitous Los Angeles crowd pleasers like fish tacos, tuna tartar and beef tenderloin with crispy potatoes, chimichurri and lime. Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, a limited part of the menu is also available to hotel guests choosing to dine poolside – the only pool menu in the city curated by a Michelin-starred chef.

But it is downstairs in the main restaurant that Vongerichten really dazzles his Beverly Hills diners. Somewhat rare in Los Angeles' restaurant scene, the palatial dining room – appointed with luxurious white leather, gold metallic and oak touches, combined with cathedral-high ceilings – sets the stage for the chef's cuisine.

Based on his immense worldwide experience, Vongerichten has created what might be described as a 'Best of Jean-Georges' menu, selecting and picking from his huge repertoire of recipes and what he considers his universal hits, including toasted egg yolk with caviar and black truffle pizza.

A savvy restaurateur, whose empire spans four continents, Vongerichten understands his local Los Angeles crowd, where the white tablecloth fine dining seen in New York or Paris is less of a draw than

elevated casual fare focused on fresh, local ingredients. Thus he has chosen not to impress with haute cuisine and fancy table theatrics but to present an understandable, simplified though elegant, savoury menu created as much as possible from the rich local bounty – such as Santa Barbara sea urchin, Monterey calamari, and seasonal, organic farmers market produce.

With the help of executive chef Steve Benjamin (from L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon in Las Vegas), Vongerichten's Beverly Hills menu aims to please all palates. While a touch of luxury remains – there are 'Caviar Creations' and a nine-course tasting menu – the overall focus is simplicity, with dishes ranging from sushi to pizza and angel hair pasta with tomato sauce, as well as an entire section devoted to 'simply cooked' pieces of protein, with not a carbohydrate in sight.

Vongerichten's west coast debut not only makes the new Waldorf Astoria hotel complete but also reflects his longstanding world expertise. He delivers serenity, skill and, without fanfare, a cuisine created with quality, timelessness and sophistication, just as Waldorf Astoria has done for the past 120 years.

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