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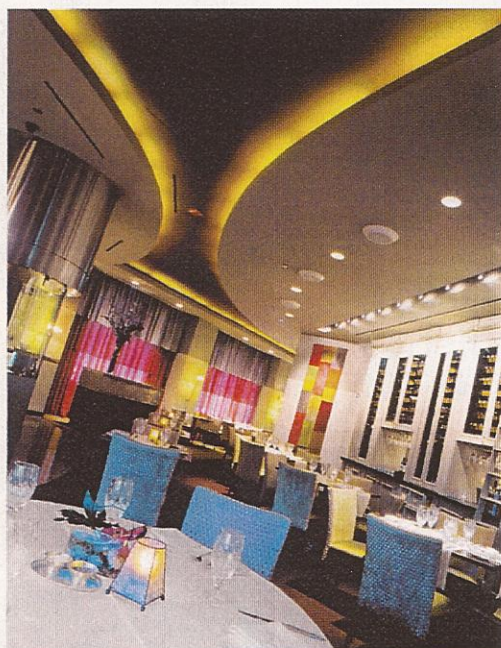
SHOPPING, DINING, ENTERTAINMENT & MAPS CHICAGO

HOT TIPS DINING

News and notes from Chicago's dinner table *By Jody Robbins*



VERMILION
EXECUTIVE CHEF
MANEET CHAUHAN
BLENDS THE
CULTURES OF
HER NATIVE INDIA
AND LATIN AMERICA
AT THIS NEW
RESTAURANT.



THE INVENTIVE
ATMOSPHERE AT
ARIA (ABOVE),
LOCATED AT THE
FAIRMONT CHICAGO,
ECHOES THE
GENRE-BENDING
CUISINE SERVED
HERE (RIGHT).



MIXING IT UP

◆ Global cuisine has a new, far-reaching definition at **Aria** (p. 51), where executive chef James Wierzelewski seems to be cooking whatever catches his eye. Offerings include seared sea scallops with lemon and gray salt, layered with foie gras and cauliflower purée; and the Hong Kong barbecued duck-and-lobster "chow mein," a concoction of coriander noodles, sweet soy and kaffir lime. The décor is perfect for those who like a splash of color in their dining room, as well as their food.

◆ Bring your own wine (it's BYO) and cash (no plastic here) if you want to sample the fresh fare at **Tweet** (p. 48). Executive chef Janice Martin and owner Michelle Fire put emphasis on farm-fresh ingredients here. Expect to drool over dishes like the savory summer corn tart with pan-roasted mushrooms in a peppercorn-cognac cream; or the Amish farms chicken *au vinaigre*, served with a caramelized onion panade and patty pan squashes.

NEW TO THE SCENE

◆ Young and old alike have been intrigued by the fusion fare at **Vermilion** (p. 56), an upscale Indian-Latin American restaurant offering both traditional Indian fine-dining options and an inventive tapas menu. Executive chef Maneet Chauhan trots out

unique dishes like a seasonal seafood ceviche, tossed with a hint of ginger and spice, and served on a chardonnay jelly. The lobster Portuguese consists of lobster tails stewed in a coconut-and-curry leaf gravy and served on a bed of vegetable saffron *pulao*. Blackened tamarind ribs served with yucca fries and a sweet corn salsa aren't exactly what one expects when sampling Indian cuisine, but as far as surprises go, this is a good one.

◆ Jacky Pluton has been feeding Chicago's desire for serious French food at **Jacky's Bistro** (p. 54) for years. Now he's added a different tack to his culinary course with **Pluton** (p. 54), a 54-seat space that promises fine dining at its best. Grounded in classic European techniques, Pluton reaches for the stars with dishes like foie gras terrine with Montbazillac aspic and a pearl onion confit, or bone marrow-crusted beef tenderloin with a seven-spice reduction and porcini mashed potatoes. It would seem that Pluton hopes to become a player in the city's four-star dining landscape.

◆ Also exploring new ground is **Café Matou** (p. 53) executive chef Charlie Socher, who has opened **Charlie's on Leavitt** (p. 43) with his sister Susan. Leaving Franco territory, Socher's new, more affordable spot has influences from the cuisines of Asia and South America. **VZ**