

## WHEN THE MAGICIAN TAKES OVER

Leonardo Concezzi's Chef's table at VIU will delight Bangkok's discerning diners.



Epicures in the city will be delighted with what St Regis Bangkok has in store for them. To begin with VIU, their international grill is getting a menu make-over of sorts to reflect a New York-style bistro. Explains St Regis' general manager Krister Svensson, "The food will be French with a New York twist but with Asian flair. The city could do with a good bistro." Do not however expect Nouvelle French, he clarifies, "The menu will be 'new French', not nouvelle".

But that is not all you have to look forward to. Expect monthly wine tasting parties at the Decanter wine bar in partnership with boutique wine importers 'fin'; while JoJo' (the Italian restaurant) will host eight-course Italian wine dinners also matched with fin's handcrafted wines from different regions of Italy.

The plan here obviously is to turn the hotel into a destination for discerning diners. The pièce de résistance, however, is the Chef's Table courtesy executive chef Leonardo Concezzi. In the brief time that Concezzi has headed the kitchens at St Regis he is already making waves. Not surprising considering he was once head chef at Gordon Ramsay at Fortevillage Sardinia and before that resident head chef at Gianni

Versace's Lake Como home and a Michelin starred restaurant in Italy. Concezzi believes that, "If you have passion for food and cooking, all you need is a pan and a stove to cook up a storm." But for his Chef's table he has access to considerably far more and if the 10-course tasting menu that I experienced was anything to go by, Concezzi is a magician. The meal was paired with absolute gems from fin's considerable wine selection of boutique wines sourced from 18 countries.

A long table set up in front of the Viu open-kitchen gave us front row seats to the theatre of dining. The meal began with two entrees – served in a martini glass was a chilled chawanmushi of Alaskan crab, and Yellow-fin tuna micuit.

The chawanmushi is creamy, its delicate flavours enhanced with a rich goose liver sauce, paired with it are the light strawberry, berry and mineral notes of Champagne Blanc de Noir Brut 1er Cru AOC, Gonet-Medeville. The yellow-fin tuna micuit (semi-cooked) is covered in a ponzu foam and accompanied by balsamic caviar, Japanese paprika, dehydrated squid, apple-mango-miso chutney. A complex list of flavours for sure but boldly taking them on was the citrus zest and peppery notes of 2010 Terrassen Gruner Veltliner DAC, Fred Loimer, Kamptal, Austria.

Next Concezzi plated a trio of hot entrees all cooked sous vide. The Boston lobster is cooked at 52 degrees for 12 minutes and served with DOP Burrata cheese and ponzu spuma with a bite of wasabi and subtle sweetness of vanilla; Sous vide monk fish is marinated in Asian herbs and topped with a saffron foam, accompanied by a taro dim sum filled with liquid foie gras; and lastly Rougie foie gras served with dehydrated mango jam cut with 74 percent dark Valrhona chocolate. Paired with these three are a viognier from Umbria, Italy, a 2007 Clos de la Coulee de Serrant, from Loire France, and a 2009 Gewurztraminer from Alsace, France. We are half-way through and set before us are the refresh-

ing flavours of a mango, lemongrass and Gonet Medeville Blanc de Noir Champagne sorbet.

The mains are a selection of "Meat Bites". Duck rillettes in a flaky pithivier (or pie) with a salad of artichoke and cepe mushrooms; chorizo coated veal and oxtail pastilla served with vegetable pave and a port wine reduction; tender slow-cooked lamb loin in chicken stock, wrapped in pork net and covered with gold leaf; and cubes of New York prime rib cooked at 52 degrees with roasted garlic and creamy mashed potatoes. These are paired with the 2005 Pinot Noir Cuvée Apolline AOC, Domaine Bott Geyl, Alsace, France; the 2004 Alfa Spiga DO, Bodegas O. Fournier, Ribera del Duero, Spain; the 2008 Sucano Cabernet Franc, Azienda Madonna Del Latte Orvieto, Umbria, Italy; and the 2007 Granato, Elisabetta Foradori, Trentino, Italy. The meal ends with a delicate and light crepe au gratin, orange compote, rum raisin ice cream paired to a subtle and sophisticated 2006 Rigioletto "Santa Christina" IGT, Zenato, Veneto, Italy.

*The chef's table can be booked with a 48-hour notice. Approximately Bt4,000-6,000 per person depending on menu and wine.*