



# Wines down South



## A GOURMET EVENING WITH CHEF TODD RICHARDS

### THE CAFÉ AT THE RITZ-CARLTON, BUCKHEAD

By Doc Lawrence

ATLANTA- The Café at The Ritz-Carlton, Buckhead has a new chef de cuisine, the much-heralded Todd Richards, who brings exuberance and imagination together with expert cooking techniques and the finest local ingredients, synthesized in a modern American menu with a gentle touch of New South magic.

Newly appointed, Chef Richards starts the day before sunrise, researching ingredients and purveyors, culminating with a menu of dishes perfectly balanced, fresh and infused with flavor.

On a lovely Atlanta spring evening, I arrived at my table in the Café, filled with anticipation and a healthy appetite. Several years back, I dined in Louisville's Oakroom at the Seelbach Hotel, my first introduction to Chef Richards' remarkable culinary creations, and this was my opportunity to welcome him to my hometown.

My selections began with appetizers of chicken liver pâté that came with a delightful piece of peanut brittle, followed by the Chef's delightful crispy oysters with deviled egg salad, lemon dressing complete with Tabasco foam and caviar. The wine selected by Sommelier Linda Torres Alacon, was a magnificent white Bordeaux, was the catalyst, bringing all the flavors together gently, in harmony.



Linda Torres Alacon is the Sommelier at the Ritz-Carlton Buckhead in charge of over 400 bottles in the acclaimed cellar.

Todd Richards' Kentucky experience manifests from time to time and the pork schnitzel was a masterpiece from his Bluegrass days, accompanied by grilled Vidalia onions, and mac 'n cheese casserole served with bacon relish. This was followed by seared duck breast, duck confit risotto croquettes with a sunny side up duck egg, celery root and a horseradish duck sauce.

No son of the South ever avoids dessert: it's de rigueur down here and Chef Richards served up his memorable finale, a maple pumpkin bar with a pecan crisp with homemade waffle ice cream.

Chef Richard's said that the dinner menu will change seasonally, divided into traditional and modern selections. The spring menu features appetizers such as Yellow Fin Tuna Crudo with Bourbon Roasted Pineapple, Bourbon Barrel Aged Soy and Preserved Shallot and Lobster Tempura with Soy Aioli, North Carolina Black Rice Puree, Pickled Ice Radishes and Lime; and entrées included Chicken 'n Dumplings with Black Truffle Gnocchi, Spring Peas, The Best Carrots Ever and Chicken Jus and Wild Salmon, Carolina Gold Rice, Green Tomato Salsa and Sea Island Red Peas.

Chef Richards has earned accolades at some of the country's finest dining venues and has appeared on Iron Chef America crusades to find a cure for Lupus. When he's not creating his menus, he often plays jazz piano at home.



Esteemed, ever-ebullient Chef Todd Richards heads the heralded gourmet dining program at the Ritz-Carlton Buckhead.

