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At the Red Salt Room at The Garden City Hotel, celebrity chef David Burke offers 'seasonal and signature dishes.' (Photo courtesy of The Garden City Hotel)

Dining at the grand hotel

By: Adina Genn | December 7, 2018 | 0

Stepping into 1221 at MFP, a new dining spot at the Roslyn Hotel, is a bit like entering a Zen-like speakeasy.

The cream leather booths are Gold-Coast sleek, and the hushed ambience pairs well with the menu. The restaurant features modern American cuisine under the direction of Chef Tomoyuki Kobayashi, who honed his skills at such noteworthy restaurants as Lespinasse, Alain Ducasse and Asitate at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel. He also served as executive chef for the Poll Group, having opened Toku Modern Asian at Americana Manhasset in 2007. And the dishes are nuanced by French and Asian flairs.



Inside 1221 at MFP at the Roslyn Hotel, there's a sleek speakeasy

All of this blends with the thoughtful selections of wine, spirits, beer (many of them local) and cocktails. Over the speaker system, the laidback soundtrack – a mix of swing, hip-hop and lounge – informs the setup for an elegant evening. And the service is attentive, knowledgeable and never overbearing.

The setting seems to match Roslyn's upscale backdrop.

"The Roslyn Hotel is in this historic business district area – the environment has a very Gatsby vibe," said Kama Ahmed, the restaurant's food and beverage general manager.



Kamal Ahmed: 'Every two months, there is something different, new and exciting' when it comes to the wine list at 1221 at MFP.

The neighborhood brings "very influential guests" who tend to "dine five times a week in New York City," he said, noting that when they're on Long Island, they can enjoy value and fine dining without trekking back to Manhattan.

Restaurateurs at Long Island's toniest hotels and lodging spots seemingly of an unspoken promise: Dine here and we will surpass your every expectation through food, drink and ambiance.

This is especially true at some of the region's newcomers. At The Garden City Hotel, for example, there are several fresh venues, including Red Salt Room David Burke, the celebrity chef who appeared on "Top Chef Masters," and a James Beard Foundation's "Who's Who of Food and Beverage in America" inductee.

They join a host of other posh culinary purveyors. There's the Scarpetta Beach at Gurney's Montauk Resort & Seawater Spa along with restaurants at Oheka (The American Hotel, The North Fork Table & Inn, among others.

"Every hotel I've been to has quality restaurants," said James Dunne, an assistant professor with New York Institute of Technology's hospitality studies department and the general counsel of the executive board of the Long Island Hospitality Association.

"All the places I would dine at, I would recommend," he added, noting that along with good food, "they get a very trained staff."

And yet for many hotels, there's a challenge.

"Long Islanders don't think to go into a hotel," Dunne said. "There's a wall, a barrier – a mental block." The barrier can be as simple as finding hotel parking, or navigating a hotel lobby just to reach the restaurant, he noted.

Yet when it comes to, say, a community such as Huntington Village that is dotted with restaurants, "everyone wants to come to eat," he said.

Still, properties such as 1221 at MFP Restaurant, which sits across from the recently reopened, legendary music club My Father's Place, or the new David Burke venues at the Garden City Hotel "are on to something," Dunne said, because they "bring people to the property with an attraction."

It helps when that attraction is tangible – such as Bistro 58 at Jake's Hotel & Casino in Islandia, which Dunne noted, brings the promise of gaming, and the parking lot is always full.

Depending on the arrangement, the attraction can help fuel a property's revenue growth.

The Garden City Hotel, for example, has "a great built-in clientele through the hotel channels," Burke said.

And 1221 also serves up food at My Father's Place, offering a gastro-pub menu, showcasing Kobayashi and his kitchen.

At the Garden City Hotel, whose King Bar was hopping on a recent Thursday afternoon, "the promise we strive to deliver a great dining experience, seasonal and signature dishes in a great room with wonderful service, served with professionalism and the right value," Burke said.

And that rings true, Dunne said.

The Garden City Hotel "offers a grand experience," Dunne said. "It's a beautiful property, and very well run."

And to deliver that experience, the team "goes through [a] training process in customer service and hospitality,



Fine dining at 1221 at MFP



The King Bar by David Burke is one of the new attractions at The Garden City Hotel.

Burke said. "The team is constantly discussing how to deliver a better experience. The chefs are constantly honing their crafts over the supervisory world class chefs and pastry chefs."

Where possible, it helps to build relationships outside the hotel. The Vian Hotel & Spa, for instance, is just down the road from the NYCB Theater at Westbury. Inside, the hotel's Marco Polo's Restaurant & Bar offers Italian fusion cuisine in an intimate setting, which can serve as a draw for the theater crowd when attending shows, Dunne said. It's also LEED-certified by the U.S. Green Building Council, Dunne said, pointing to a further draw for those who support green living.

Such venues can also benefit by inviting local groups and networking associations to hold their monthly meetings there. And by recognizing guests who are there for a catered affair, venues can tap into additional marketing opportunities. At a recent open house for the renovated Marriott in Melville, for example, the hotel showcased its kitchen by serving up small plates and mini desserts. That evening, the hotel offered raffle items, which included a dinner at the hotel's restaurant, where visitors enjoy a large bar and open seating areas, as well as tucked-away tables for more private meals.

It helps to offer motivation to return.

In Roslyn, 1221 at MFP, for example, boasts a wine and beer list that is "esoteric," as the restaurant works with "small producers," making their offerings hard to find in the area, Ahmed said.

"Every two months, there is something different, new and exciting," he said.

Reason enough for the discriminating diner to return.

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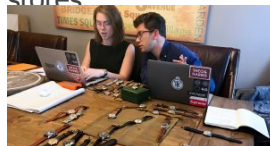


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