



ON
THE MENU

TreeTops, Philadelphia

Location: The Rittenhouse 210 W. Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia
Concept: contemporary
Date opened: June 19, 1989, as TreeTops
Capacity: 125, including 12 seats in a private dining room
Covers: 80 for lunch and 80 for dinner
Check average: \$25 for lunch; \$47 for dinner
Best-selling item: sautéed jumbo lump crab cakes, spaghetti squash and lobster jus
Worst-selling item: generally any type of pasta
Menu maker: executive chef Jean-Marie Lacroix

Having received a license for creativity that is nearly unfettered, executive chef Jean-Marie Lacroix at Philadelphia's The Rittenhouse hotel is in the process of realizing his vision.

Nearly 12 years ago Rittenhouse executives first tried to recruit Lacroix to work at the restaurant. But he turned down the offer because he was in the midst of his career at the Four Seasons in Philadelphia, where he'd served as opening chef beginning in 1983.

Eighteen years later in 2001, Lacroix announced his retirement from the Four Seasons' Fountain restaurant, shortly after receiving the James Beard Award as Best Chef in the Mid-Atlantic. The chef came out of retirement because of the almost limitless resources he has been given, and they facilitate the creativity of his menu.

"What I have here is going to be more or less my restaurant," Lacroix says.

Once all facets of the project are completed, the re-imagined TreeTops restaurant will debut as Lacroix at The Rittenhouse by the middle of 2002.

The hotel also is developing a pastry shop and chocolate prep areas within the restaurant's main kitchen as part of the approximately \$2 million project, says David Benton, the hotel's vice president and general manager.

In addition to undertaking the ongoing evolution of the menu, Lacroix is working with designer Meg Rodgers on the look of the restaurant, which will not close during the project.

Since joining the Rittenhouse last September, Lacroix has been experimenting with various dishes using French techniques for the menu.

"It's more a feeling than anything else," Lacroix says. "Sometimes you might change your mind or your dish in a matter of minutes. So I like to work that way."

Current dinner entrées range from seared tuna fillet with vegetable ragoût and curry jus to a sautéed rack of lamb with potato gratin and tapenade sauce.

Lacroix's specialties include his mange-tout — French for "eat everything" — dishes for two, in which he uses various parts of meat and prepares them in one dish through a variety of cooking methods. For instance, in the chicken dish Lacroix makes a farce, or stuffing, from the thigh meat, which is combined with diced pork fat to make a cream mousse and then placed inside boned-out drumsticks and roasted. Lacroix uses the bones in a stock reduction. The chicken liver and foie gras are used along with a number of other ingredients to make a steamed bread pudding. The wings also can be fried and served as a garnish. The dish often is served with braised cardoons.

— James Peters

Dinner

Roasted veal tenderloin with soft polenta, broccoli rabe and garlic jus \$29.50

Grilled filet of beef with wild mushroom gâteau and Cabernet sauce \$24.50

Grilled salmon with haricots verts and saffron sauce \$20.95

Lunch

Sautéed jumbo lump crab cakes, spaghetti squash and lobster jus \$21

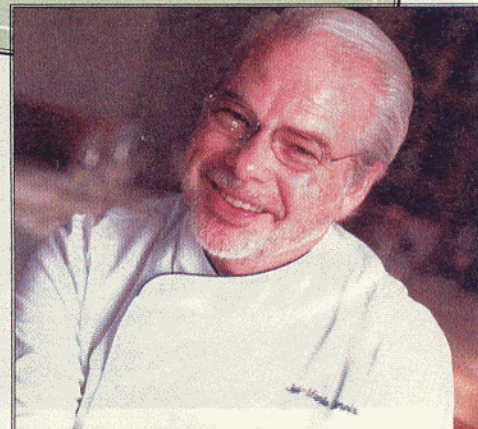
Braised veal osso buco with roasted parsnips, lemon gremolata \$19

Brunch

(includes various serving selections in addition to entrée)

Jumbo lump crab cake with spicy tomato sauce and shaved fennel \$38

Grilled tenderloin of beef with Cognac and green peppercorn sauce \$36



Chef Jean-Marie Lacroix, above, came out of retirement to work at TreeTops restaurant in Philadelphia's The Rittenhouse hotel, left. He is redeveloping the restaurant, which will debut as Lacroix at The Rittenhouse by the middle of 2002. "What I have here is going to be more or less my restaurant."