

# HOTEL F&B LIFE

## IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK

*The Leopard Lounge and Restaurant, a favorite meeting place of the rich and famous.*

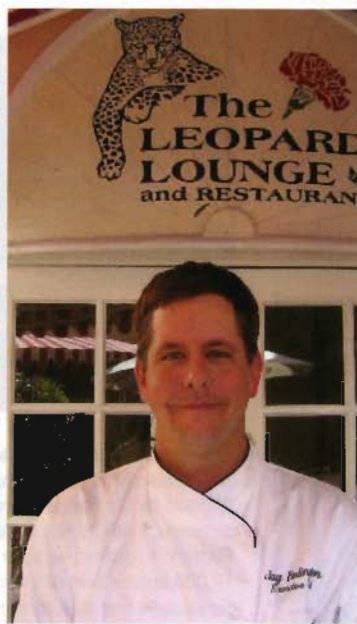
"What happens in the Leopard Lounge stays here," chuckles John Bowman, bar manager at the Chesterfield Palm Beach's aforementioned famed lounge and restaurant.

Shrouded in an animal-print veil of mystique and seduction, it's a place where celebrities like Rod Stewart, George Hamilton, Tommy Hilfiger, Joan Collins, or Lionel Richie drift around in anonymity (no cameras allowed or autographs solicited); where jetsetters come to rub elbows; and where pretty young things (male and female) just might be able to find some older, wealthier companionship.

"Young" is a relative term at the Leopard Lounge since it attracts a mature audience in general, "forty and over for the most part," says Bowman. Known as a singles place, couples are still welcome and comfortable there. Special occasion menus, "Romantic Interludes," created by Executive Chef Jay Redington, can attest to that. However, for those who haven't met their match, nightly live entertainment lends to finding love on the dance floor.

"A woman can feel comfortable coming in by herself," adds Bowman. "We will look out for her and might point out a nice single gentleman. Or maybe we'll introduce her to someone who piques her interest. It's not a part of the job description. We just do it to help nice people find each other—it's easier to meet people when you have a facilitator."

Aside from the music and gentle nudging from cupid bartenders, the décor whispers seductively, enticing the lovelorn to lose themselves in the dim lighting from ornate chandeliers and black-shaded table lamps; the camouflage of lush jungle flora and flower arrangements of epic proportion; dark crimson walls accented by leopard-print carpeting and wallpaper; and the beguiling "Luscious Ladies of Red."



(Clockwise) The Leopard Lounge at the Chesterfield Palm Beach; Executive Chef Jay Redington; and Bar Manager John Bowman (left) with Melisa Honny and Lou Cicchetti, bartenders.

"On the ceiling is a fresco by Italian artist Mario Lino," says Bowman. "Covered with seduction scenes, there are beautiful women pictured, and we call them 'the Luscious Ladies of Red.'" What he doesn't mention is that the fresco showcases half-naked ladies, naughty cherubs, and leering satyrs. If that doesn't say love is in the air ...

"There's a '70s retro thing going on, right down to our leopard-print vests and bowties," admits Bowman. "But it's all very classy, tasteful."

### RETRO DRINK LIST

On the retro topic, Bowman changes gears to talk about the drink list he's working on, featuring old school but ever-popular cocktails like the Cuba Libre, Sidecar, Grasshopper, Mojito, Cape Cod, Dirty Martini, Greyhound, and Cosmo.

"These are still favorites with our clientele," says Bowman. "We also make our own infused vodkas, which are popular now. And we have the most expensive martini on the 'island'—the Millionaire's

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Martini—made with Remy Martin Louis XIII Cognac and Cristal. It'll set you back \$300 for one glass."

It sounds extravagant, but a lot of the Leopard Lounge's patrons can afford it. They are the set who wears Gucci handbags and Armani suits (there is a strictly enforced jacket policy), dresses to the nines on a Monday, and tips \$100 every time they order a drink. Since they're also accustomed to fine dining, Jay Redington's culinary talents don't disappoint.

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## TASTINGS HOTEL F&B NEWS

### DOMESTIC

#### JW Marriott Grand Rapids, Michigan, has named John State as the executive chef for the new hotel, set to open Fall 2007. While in command of designing the concept and launching the signature market fresh restaurant, six.one.six, named for West Michigan's area code, State will also oversee the hotel's catering services, destination lounge, and in-room dining services. As former chef de cuisine of a nationally acclaimed Orlando restaurant, State brings a penchant for seasonal and quality ingredients to this new venue, in an effort to preserve and present freshness and flavors to guests ...



Chef State

#### The Eldorado Hotel & Spa, Santa Fe, New Mexico, has promoted Charles H. Kassels from sous chef to executive chef at the four-diamond, 219-room hotel. In his new role, Kassels will direct the culinary team, which oversees banquet services, Eldorado Court, and the



Chef Kassels

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award-winning The Old House restaurant. Kassels' creative artisan style blends fresh seasonal and regional organic ingredients with Southwestern and Asian influences. His personal use of French techniques will yield a one-of-a-kind dining experience for guests ...

**The Ritz-Carlton, Sarasota** was privileged to welcome Louis-Fabrice Latour, head of the highly respected Burgundian Domaine and Maison Louis Latour, for a Winemaker Dinner on February 28, 2007, at the resort's Vernona restaurant. Guests enjoyed an intimate reception and four-course dinner showcasing the cuisine of Chef de Cuisine Jeremy Saccardi with a menu designed to highlight the fine wines from Louis Latour's family-owned and operated, tenth generation vineyards ...



(Left to right) Executive Chef Frederic Morineau, the Ritz-Carlton, Sarasota; Louis-Fabrice Latour, JC Requero, F&B director, the Ritz-Carlton, Sarasota; and Chef de Cuisine Jeremy Saccardi, the Ritz-Carlton, Sarasota.



Redfield's at the Renaissance Syracuse.

**The Renaissance Syracuse**, formerly the Marx Hotel & Conference Center, completed its conversion to the Marriott family Renaissance brand and is open for business. With its renowned full-service restaurant, Redfield's, distinctive luxury accommodations, and 12,000 square feet of dedicated meeting space, Syracuse's first true conference center fits well with the upscale profile of Marriott's Renaissance brand ...

Recruited from Barcelona in 2001 to lead the culinary team at Marquesa, the AAA Five-Diamond restaurant at the **Fairmont Scottsdale Princess**, Jorge Gallardo has been promoted to the position of executive sous chef overseeing all restaurant operations at the prop-

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## LEOPARD LOUNGE continued from page 9 CUSTOM MENUS

Redington custom fits entrées to his patrons' preferences, whipping up a favorite dish—even if it's not on the menu. "I have regular customers who order an omelet on Saturday night, or they ask what types of fresh fish we're serving without even looking at the menu. They dream up what they want based on the main ingredient, and I make it for them," says Redington. This sort of "everything and anything" cooking led Redington to take the Leopard Lounge in an American Bistro direction, where he can "mix ethnic influences and not throw off the menu by adding something like an Asian dish."

A good example is the Wasabi Pea Encrusted Ahi Tuna with Miso Sauce and Jasmine Rice. Redington had some wasabi peas lying around and decided to experiment. The dish ended up being a hit. Other popular concoctions are the Seared Sea Bass with Snap Pea and Fennel Salad with Tomato Anchovy Dressing and the Herb Seared Rack of Lamb with Zucchini Risotto and Red Onion Marmalade.

"Because we're a hotel restaurant," adds Redington, "we also need to offer a mix between the high-end gourmet fare and comfort food. Sometimes people just want to feel like they're at home, so we give them dishes like the Fresh Tomato and Basil Spaghetti with Asiago." There is a casual dining menu specifically for the Lounge (served until midnight daily and 1:00 A.M. on the weekends) and the Cigar Room (called Churchill's, where Winston Churchill's grandson has a locker). The menu includes lighter, simpler nosh like the Kobe Beef Hot Dog on Pretzel Roll and the Chilled Seafood Sampler (shrimp cocktail, jumbo lump crab meat, caviar, oysters on the half shell, and smoked salmon).

The Leopard Lounge, with its intriguing clientele, titillating décor, tantalizing cuisine, and indefinable vibe, is a force to be reckoned with in the Palm Beach nightlife scene. It is by far the most popular and most famous nightclub on the "Island," as the locals call it. Maybe one of the Island's own, Bowman, defines it best: "You never know who or what you're going to see at the Leopard Lounge."—Ashley Allen

## key to the pantry

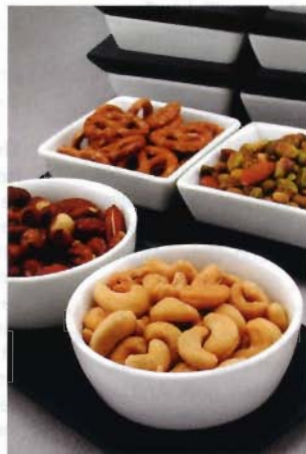
### HALO HEAT BANQUET CARTS

Check out the new wall-friendly full-perimeter bumper on Alto-Shaam's Halo Heat Banquet Carts for the perfect solution to your banquet needs. In capacities ranging from 96 to 192 plated meals, Alto-Shaam has you covered whether your banquet needs are large or small. Designed to accommodate covered or uncovered plate carriers or hot foods in bulk for transport, you can count on Halo Heat cabinets to provide a gentle uniform heat without the need for moisture pans, water, or canned heat. Plus, you also get the quality and durability associated with Alto-Shaam equipment. For banqueting at its best, rely on Alto-Shaam Halo Heat for the longest possible hot food holding life. CONTACT: 800-558-8744, [www.alto-shaam.com](http://www.alto-shaam.com)



### SERVING BOWLS

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