

WINE DINNER ■ PRAPAI KRAISORNKOVIT

# Tantalising treat for the tastebuds

Exclusive Chef's Table dinner successfully showcasing a degustation menu distinguished by exquisite wine pairings

**F**in (Fabulous is needed), a leading local supplier of boutique wines, worked closely with the St Regis Bangkok recently to organise a special event called "Chef's Table Wine Dinner, Vol 1" at the hotel's elegant Viu restaurant.

The hotel's executive chef Leonardo Concezzi, and Fin managing director Benjawan Wisootsat joined forces to design the menu and wine list for the evening. The result was a truly spectacular 10-course degustation/tasting menu, perfectly matched with 10 handcrafted wines chosen from Fin's collection by its MD and her associate, Jan Ganser.

As an executive chef Concezzi has to spend a lot of time behind a desk, but like all chefs is happiest when working in the kitchen.

"If you have passion for food and cooking, a pan and a stove is enough to cook up a storm," he declared.

He began his culinary career at the tender age of 14 after earning a diploma in hotel and hospitality management. After stints in Melbourne and Florida, as well as working as the resident head chef at Gianni Versace's Lake Como home and at a Michelin-starred restaurant in Italy, he moved to the Middle East to work at the Sheraton Doha, the Jumeirah Beach Hotel in Dubai and the Four

Seasons in Damascus.

He returned to more familiar territory when he became executive chef at Fortevillage on the island of Sardinia. There he had to oversee 21 gourmet restaurants with a brigade of 100 chefs and 4,500 food covers a day.

He took up his present post in Bangkok only last year.

At Viu, a chef's table for 10 was set up in front of the gleaming open kitchen where the amicable Concezzi personally prepared each dish while explaining various cooking techniques including the now trendy *sous vide* method.

The evening proved to be an impressive showcase of his expertise and professionalism. As each dish was served, Benjawan provided some information on the wine chosen to match it.

A French rose champagne (Extra Brut Premier Cru AOC Gonet-Medeville) was served as an aperitif. Awarded 89 points by *Wine Spectator*, this displayed more citrus and yeast notes than berry and had a refreshingly lean, dry finish.

Two innovative cold starters — a chilled *chawan mushi* of Alaskan crab with goose-liver sauce plus a yellowfin tuna *micuit* with ponzu foam balsamic caviar — were served with the vibrant, structured Champagne Blanc de Noir Brut Premier Cru AOC, also from Gonet-Medeville, and a 2010 Terrassen Gruner Veltliner DAC Fred Loimer from Kamptal in Austria. The latter was slightly sweet but full of pungent citrus zest and herbs.

Three delicious hot dishes followed: Boston lobster with a cheese (DOP bur-



■ Jan Ganser, Benjawan Wisootsat and executive chef Leonardo Concezzi.

French duck rillettes *pithivier* with an artichoke and Cape mushroom salad; Spanish veal *chorizo* sausage with oxtail *pastilla* in a port-wine reduction; slow-cooked loin of lamb wrapped in a "pork net"; and 52-degree New York prime rib cubes.

Cleverly selected to wash down the duck rillettes was a 2005 Pinot Noir, Cuvee Apolline AOC Domaine Bott Geyl, from Alsace. Certified as both organic and biodynamic, this was bright and fresh with well-concentrated finishing fruit — a gorgeous wine which I'm sure would go well with any meat dish.

Making a great companion for the flavourful veal chorizo was a 2004 Alfa Spiga DO Bodegas O. Fournier from Ribera del Duero, Spain. This big red was thick with tannins and stuffed with oaky notes. It finishes fresh and clean and was awarded 91 points by *Wine Spectator*.

A 2008 Sucano Cabernet Franc, Azienda Madonna Del Latte Orvieto, from Umbria, was chosen to go with the slow-cooked lamb loin. This brilliant red wine had soft, rounded, silky tannins and a long finish. The deliciously integrated sweetness of the fruits were reminiscent of a great Bordeaux.

Also slowly cooked, the New York prime rib cubes were paired with a 2007 Granato, Elisabetta Foradori, from Trentino in Italy. This superb red had ripe, silky tannins with subtle notes of oak lingering on the finish. Robert Parker gave it 94 points.

Ending the meal perfectly was a luscious dessert — a crepe au gratin with orange compote and rum resin ice-cream. Benjawan had chosen a 2006 Rigoletto "Santa Christina" IGT Zenato from Venice to accompany it.

Our last wine of the evening had a bouquet of remarkable complexity, an aroma of ripe fruit, then hazelnut and, finally, honey and vanilla.

Its rich finish seemed to linger forever — making it an ideal grand finale.

**Fin's fabulous chef's table wine dinner with Executive Chef Concezzi can be arranged for groups of 10 people or less. Advance booking is necessary. Call 02-653-2009.**



■ The chef's table set up in front of Viu's gleaming open kitchen.



■ Veal chorizo, oxtail *pastilla*, vegetable pave and port-wine reduction.



■ Yellowfin tuna *micuit*, ponzu foam balsamic caviar.



■ *Sous vide* Rougie foie gras served with a mango and Valrhona 74% dark chocolate jam.

rata) ponzu spuma; *sous vide* monkfish; and *sous vide* Rougie foie gras. These were paired (respectively) with a 2010 Viognier Azienda Madonna Del Latte Orvieto from Umbria, Italy; a 2007 Clos de la Coulee de Serrant Nicolas Joly from the French Loire and a 2009 Gewurztraminer Les Elements AOC Domaine Bott Geyl from Alsace.

Viognier is a noble grape variety which goes perfectly with seafood and all sorts of fish dishes as well as with Asian cuisine. Served with the Boston lobster it brought forth a pleasant acidity in addition to fine aromas of exotic fruit and delicate herbal hints.

The Clos de la Coulee de Serrant was a truly impressive white wine. The grapes come from one of the steepest and best sites in the Loire with the oldest vines. They ripen to a gleaming gold and boast a complex mineral, spicy and nutty bouquet with honey and butter nuances. Very full-bodied and well-balanced, it went wonderfully with the monkfish which had been marinated in Asian herbs before being given the *sous vide* treatment.

Awarded 88 points by Robert Parker, the Gewurztraminer Les Elements we sampled had a subtle sweetness and strongly persistent florality and finishing spice, making it great company for the foie gras, which was served with a dark chocolate and mango jam.

Chef Concezzi had prepared a mango-lemongrass sorbet to help us cleanse our palates and then we were ready for the quartet of meaty main courses: