

Food for thought

1000 reasons why



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- Mandy Rowe

THIS is perfect timing. I have recently enjoyed a warm asparagus salad at BOKA Kitchen and Bar in Seattle and am reminded that spring is just around the corner. This means any day now boxes of crisp baby asparagus will be seen filling the shelves of our local grocery stores.

Asparagus, considered a delicacy in the culinary world, is prized for its sugar-snap sweetness, crisp texture and perennial good looks: an important consideration for plating.

It can be dolled up with the addition of a hollandaise sauce, or simply sautéed in butter and garlic. Call me old-fashioned, but my favourite asparagus dish comes with a dollop of creamy béarnaise sauce, accompanied with a perfectly poached egg.

In fact, the way Angie Roberts, executive chef of BOKA Kitchen and Bar, has prepared my warm asparagus salad approaches culinary nirvana.

Three sleek viridian green asparagus spears are the foundation to a sprig of baby frisée and a béarnaise coated poached egg. A glass of Heinz Eifel "Shine" 2009 Riesling — with hints of apple and flint — selected by the sommelier completes the experience.

BOKA, an acronym for 'Bold Original Kitchen Artistry' delivers organic local produce creatively on a plate.

Mind you, BOKA's artistry is not just relegated to its urban American menu and handcrafted cocktails, but flows seamlessly throughout every aspect of Hotel 1000.

Glass artist J.P. Canlis has made his mark on the public spaces. His 11 feet high solid glass bamboo installation — smack-bang in the middle of BOKA — adds an oriental twist to the hotel's North West inspired interiors. I particularly liked his series of lopsided oversized etched wine glasses (*Dancing Portrait*, 2006) that looked as if they too had indulged in one too many handcrafted cocktails.

Follow the creative trail across the foyer into the chic and cosmopolitan Studio 1000 replete with an open fire-pit and two curvaceous designer wine-racks. Pull up one of the many chocolate-brown leather club chairs, order a glass of Washington State pinot gris and be mesmerized by the iridescent back-lit feature wall: an enormous mural awash with fuchsia pink, linden green and raw sienna hues. It's an art-forward flashback to the 70's lava lamp phenomenon: only on a grander scale.

A quick look underfoot also tells me the carpet is bold and bespoke. A Kandinsky inspired palette - of tangerines, mustard and madder - woven into a tapestry, wafted and warped its way around the hotel's lobby and corridors.

Even the transition from the public to private space is noteworthy. My room number — 1205 — is embedded into a stone triptych adorned with three bronze chopsticks. I ponder its composition and patterned array of yin and yang like brush-strokes and believe it to be an encrypted message: a symbol of dreaming perhaps? It's not too far fetched: after all, the hotel designers seem to have considered every other detail.

I cross the threshold — leaving the hubbub of downtown Seattle — and am enveloped in the muted hues and



BOKA's warm asparagus salad.

understated elegance of room 1205. A sanctum of cherry-wood veneers, granite bench-tops and sandstone: its mood-driven palette oozes serenity and calm. It's going to take something truly tempting to lure me from my lodgings.

I suspect BOKA's six-course degustation dinner with accompanying wines might just do the trick.

Another advantage to staying at Hotel 1000 is its location. It's a stones throw from the Seattle Art Museum (SAM), Pike Place Market and Pioneer Square. If shopping is your thing, then every conceivable department store is just a short stroll away.

If you're planning a trip to Seattle and are on the lookout for a place to stay, I can give you 1000 reasons to book into Hotel 1000: the first being Angie Robert's warm asparagus salad.

Steamed asparagus with Béarnaise sauce

(This has been adapted from a Neil Perry recipe).

Serves six

Ingredients:

250g unsalted butter
2 shallots, finely chopped
2 sprigs of tarragon
5 whole black peppercorns
125ml white wine
125ml wine vinegar
3 egg yolks
2 tsp tarragon, finely chopped
salt and pepper to taste

Method:

1. Cube butter into small portions and bring to room temperature.
2. Place shallots, tarragon sprigs, peppercorns, white wine and vinegar into a saucepan. Place over a medium heat and reduce liquid until about 80mls.
3. Put egg yolks in a heat proof bowl that sits comfortably over a double saucepan.
4. Strain the vinegar-wine reduction and pour over the egg yolks; whisk to incorporate.
5. Put the bowl over a saucepan of simmering water and start whisking. As it approaches the point at which it is



BOKA executive chef Angie Roberts.

fully cooked, the mixture will start to thicken by doubling or tripling in size.

7. Once the sauce is thick, start adding three to four cubes of butter at a time. Continue whisking.

8. When all the butter is incorporated, remove the bowl from the heat, add the chopped tarragon and check the seasoning.

Asparagus:

To prepare the asparagus remove the woody stalks from the end of each spear (about two centimetres). Asparagus ends can be peeled with a potato peeler and shaped into a spear. This enhances the presentation.

Allow four to five asparagus spears per person.

Steam spears for approximately five minutes. They should be tender yet still slightly crisp when eaten.

Place the steamed asparagus in the middle of a large plate and top with a dollop of béarnaise sauce then sprinkle with finely chopped tarragon leaves. Serve immediately.



Studio 1000.



Hotel 1000.

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