

For Immediate Release

Don Letendre named Executive Chef of Opus Hotel Vancouver

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(Vancouver, Canada) - With a personal history deeply rooted in Vancouver, a high regard for French culinary techniques, and extensive experience in Japanese cuisine, Opus Hotel's award-winning executive chef Don Letendre, 37, has created a global dining experience that could only exist in British Columbia. Overseeing Elixir, the 155 seat bar and restaurant, as well as Opus Bar, this executive chef has positioned the Opus as one of the premiere dining destinations in Vancouver.

Catering to both the hotel's international clientele and the sophisticated local residents of Vancouver's trendy Yaletown, Letendre's menu reflects the chef's enlightened notion of creating up-to-the-minute cuisine without borders.

"My style of cooking is true world cuisine," explains Letendre. "The concepts could originate on the French Riviera, in India, Morocco, anywhere." Also particularly proud of the local produce of the Pacific Coast, Letendre serves regionally-inspired dishes that range from intensely sweet, freshly-caught Dungeness crab, exquisite herring roe still clinging to the kelp upon which it was spawned and assorted wild mushrooms. (Vancouver is one of the chanterelle capitals of the world.) Another example of Letendre's virtuosity where he blends locally harvested ingredients can be experienced in dishes such as perfumey pine mushrooms with hot soba dashi (a traditional Japanese broth) that one can drink like tea.

Being raised in Vancouver with its preponderance of world-class Japanese restaurants and after having spent two years apprenticing in Tokyo restaurants, Letendre is greatly influenced by Japanese cuisine. An aficionado of the wide range of Japanese culinary categories, Letendre does not limit himself to sushi and other popular Western imports. A proponent of simplicity, Letendre bemoans the fact that much food today is overly complicated. "Sometimes, excellent simple dishes are the most difficult to achieve."

Perhaps the biggest lesson Letendre learned in Japan was the importance of the relationship between the 'front and back of the house'. "I intend to be involved with the customers," he says. "I have a responsibility to know that everything is working smoothly and I can't be sure of this if I'm hiding in the kitchen. Fortunately, this is a sentiment that reflects the hotel's hands-on management style!"

French food and techniques are also at the heart of Letendre's repertoire. Formerly the executive chef of the Moustache Café, a Vancouver-based French-Mediterranean restaurant, Letendre's current Elixir menu offers a generous assortment of specialties including Duck Confit Salad with walnuts, pancetta and poached egg, Pissaladiere Tart with frisee and a pine nut vinaigrette, Oven Roasted Halibut with fennel, roasted tomato, clams and saffron and Roasted Leg of Lamb, aubergine and pepper stew with yogurt.

In addition to his duties as chef of Elixir, Letendre also oversees Opus Bar, a chic, contemporary lounge. Here, Letendre has created a menu that matches a venue that encourages grazing while sipping on the Opus' signature global cocktails. Owing their originality to Letendre's culinary imagination, look for martinis sporting freshly grated nutmeg or infusions of star anise or lavender and authentic whiskey sours made with fresh egg whites.

Whatever Letendre is cooking today, you can be certain that it will change soon, "I tend to get bored doing the same thing and like to explore other combinations," he explains. "My goal is to provide comfort food with exotic flavours, and the ideal place to do so is in Vancouver where we have the freshest fish, the best selection of produce and the widest variety of international products. Vancouver is very much on the world culinary map, and Vancouverites don't realize how spoiled they are!" Letendre is quite happy to continue spoiling them.