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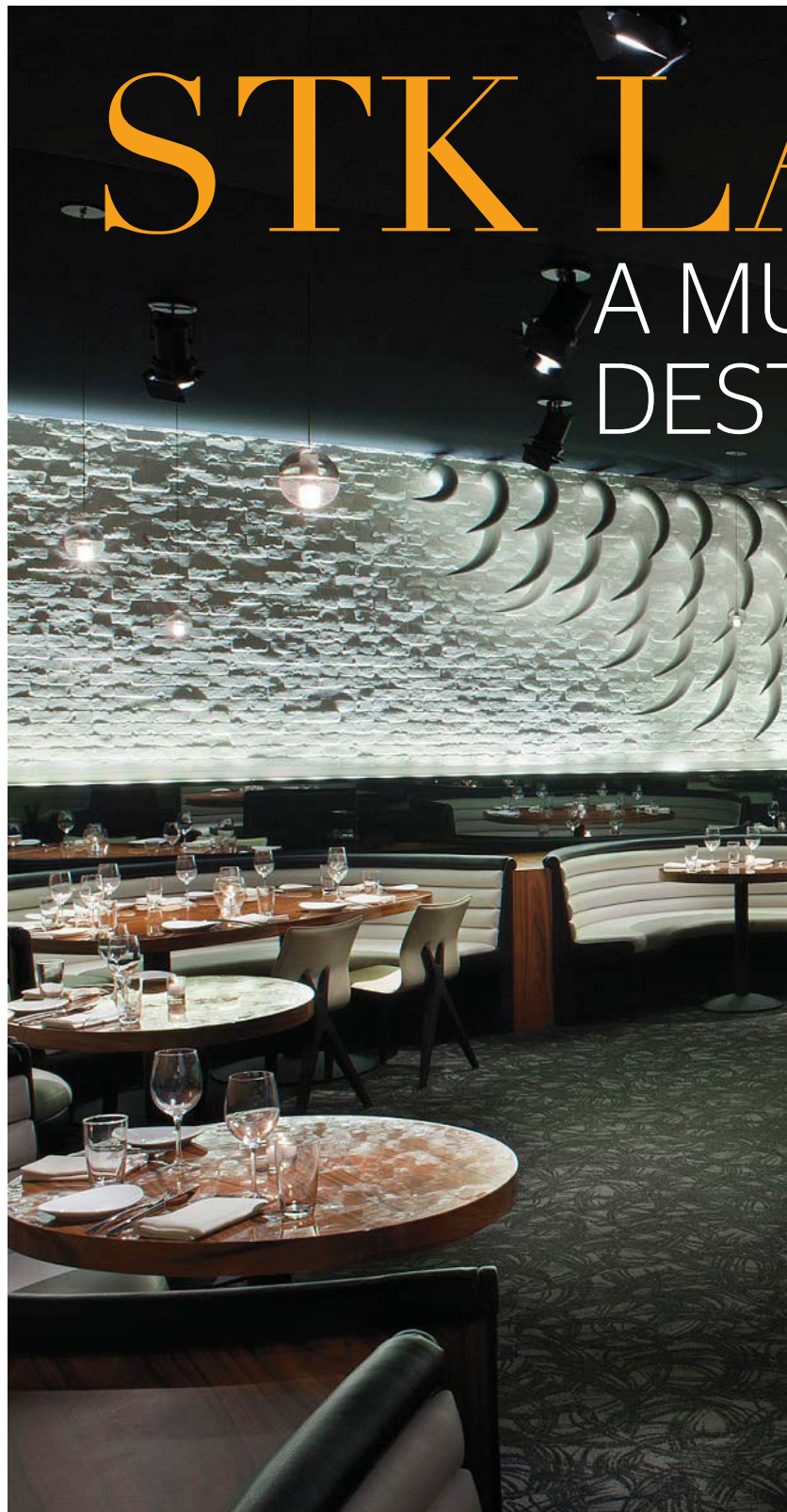
**QUINTON
VAN DER BURGH**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **TIM HULME**

WHEN IT COMES TO STEAKHOUSES, LOS ANGELES IS A CARNIVORE'S CORNUCOPIA. WHILE THE CITY OF ANGELS IS REplete WITH MEAT-MINDED EATERIES, ONE SUCH RESTAURANT — **STK IN THE W LOS ANGELES IN WEST BEVERLY HILLS** — RISES ABOVE THANKS TO AN INIMITABLE MIX: A WELL-CONCEIVED AND EXPERTLY EXECUTED MENU PROFFERED IN A HIGH-INTENSITY, CHIC CLUB-LIKE ATMOSPHERE WHERE DINING IS FAR MORE THAN EATING: IT'S AN EVENT.

► WRITTEN BY **MERILEE KERN**,
'THE LUXE LIST' EXECUTIVE EDITOR
PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF **STK LOS ANGELES**.

While patrons indubitably flock to STK LA for the food, Robert Liberato, Regional Executive Chef for the location, understands that a memorable guest experience is about far more. In Los Angeles especially, image is everything. "It's all about the drama," he offered in my exclusive interview with him. "We offer a unique and dynamic fine dining experience with the superior quality of a traditional steakhouse. We try and keep our image sleek and sexy."





A JUST DO-OR-DINE TINATION



Sexy indeed. From a dining room décor that's anything but stuffy and traditional, this chic and modern open space exudes a decidedly communal vibe that extends from the bar into the dining room. There's a resident DJ spinning high-energy, top-volume beats while you eat and imbibe. Is it a restaurant? Is it a bar? Is it a club? Yes.

STK laudably manages to blur the lines of these definable boundaries with seeming ease. However, it's not shtick, but rather a desire to redefine what a fine dining steakhouse establishment "is"...and most certainly "is not." The first line of copy on the STK LA web site aptly eradicates any confusion, boldly asserting "STK LA is not your daddy's steakhouse." Even so, daddy would most certainly enjoy STK's somewhat intense iteration of a steakhouse experience.

Despite their desire to buck tradition, menu classics are ample on the menu. My own culinary trek to STK LA allowed me to taste quite a number of courses well-suited for the steakhouse genre. This included a Burrata and Heirloom Tomato salad, with theirs boasting fresh and meaty produce, including crunchy



chopped lemon cucumber, which was blanketed with a sizable portion of the dutifully creamy and delicate cheese. I do wish the hand was a bit heavier on the arugula pesto.

While the Neuske's Smoked Bacon starter with balsamic BBQ, celery leaf and pickled onion nearly snared me, in the end I fortuitously opted for the Maine Lobster Ravioli rife with English peas and micro-greens doused in a rich truffle crema. I might add this appy paired perfectly with my crisp Domaine Chandon Rosé selection. Another in my party opted to start with the Diver Scallops—a deux portion of the nicely seared shellfish served alongside a thick wasabi cauliflower purée with spring garlic confit and nori vinaigrette. Old school Shrimp Cocktail rounded out that course—



three gorgeous, meaty and perfectly cooked-through chilled shrimp with a fairly heavily horseradish-laden cocktail sauce and fresh lemon wedge.

The bevy of seafood starters beget a Surf 'n Turf approach to our party's entrée selections but with meat top-of-mind. This consisted of a beautifully marbled and moist 14-ounce Dry-Aged Delmonico topped with a dollop of truffle butter; a 6-ounce Petit Filet served "Oscar" style with Alaskan King Crab; and STK's Lobster Duo dish of split butter poached lobster paired with an ample portion of doughy lobster gnochì, all topped with sharp parmesan and a copiously herbed butter.

And while the procession of starters, mains and sides (wickedly Spicy Broccolini and to-die-for Mac-and-Cheese) was fairly archetypal, implementation stood up to modern foodie expectations. Any well-heeled gastro-traveler would do well to dine here. And, whimsy did surface with the dessert course when we ordered "The Cloud"—a flaming cotton candy dessert comprised of Angel food cake topped with white chocolate cremeux, strawberry ice cream, strawberry compote, and whipped cream all ensconced within a cloud of cotton candy. But wait, there's more: the cotton candy is drizzled with liquor and set on fire to dramatic effect when served.

Executing all of this fabulosity is Chef Liberato, who graduated with honors from Le Cordon Bleu California School of Culinary Arts. Over the course of his career he has developed an impressive background having worked for Bon Appetit at Getty Center, The Grove's Whisper Lounge, Son of a Gun Restaurant and BLT Steakhouse. Additionally, he has showcased his cuisine at Sundance, the Oscars and South by Southwest among other star-studded affairs.

Chef Liberato commented on the eatery's fundamental approach to steakhouse fare, noting, "Something that we pride ourselves on at STK is using simple fresh ingredients. We feature as much local and seasonal product as possible. We try to keep the dishes relatively simple and let the quality of our product

Chef Liberato also revealed his personal favorite item on the menu.

"My favorite appetizer is the Brussel Sprout salad but for a steak I love the Bone in Strip," he said.

speaks for itself... While STK encompasses so much more than just a steakhouse, the premium cuts of steak are what the restaurant is best known for. It offers a wide range of crusts and toppings for all steaks as well as a unique selection of house-made sauces."

He also offered some little-known factoid gems about the restaurant, offering, "The dry aged selection process is something unique to STK. We have an amazing partnership with Meats by Lintz in Chicago who runs our dry aged program. All of our dry aged beef is USDA Prime and aged from 30 days for the Delmonico and 40 to 45 days on the Porter, Bone in Strip and Tomahawk steaks."

Chef Liberato also revealed his personal favorite item on the menu. "My favorite appetizer is the Brussel Sprout salad but for a steak I love the Bone in Strip," he said. "I believe it is one of the best steaks you can find anywhere in the country." He also gave me some celebrity 'dish' among those that have eaten at the location.

"Kerry Washington and the entire cast of Scandal dined with us in March [of 2018]. They dined on mixed apps and entrees and sipped drinks to celebrate the final season of the show. Other recent celeb diners include Chris Bosh, Perez Hilton, Kelly Osbourne, Michelle Williams and James Maslow."

Among all of his insights, it's perhaps Chef Liberato's overarching description of the eatery that resonates with me most. "STK is a unique concept that artfully blends the modern steakhouse and chic lounge into one. It sets itself apart by focusing on the experience as a whole versus any singular aspect of a good night out. It's not just the food, décor, or nightly music—it's the combination of all these things that creates a vibe you can only find at STK."

All things considered, STK is definitely a must-do destination for a 360-degree dining experience where one's penchant for prime meat and seafood are parlayed into a perfect night out on the town. ●

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