

Bon Appétit

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THE RATTLESNAKE CLUB



The Hard Rock Cafe and McDonald's notwithstanding, the first restaurant in outer space just might be The Rattlesnake Club, owned by Michael McCarty and Jimmy Schmidt. Because at the rate things are going, by the time we're living out there they'll have run out of places to open their dining phenomenon down here.

There's one in Denver, one in Detroit and, as of this month, one in Washington, D.C., located in the painstakingly restored, ornate old presidential suite of Union Station, where chiefs of state used to hold press conferences on whistle-stop tours.

Plans exist for one in New York, one in the Los Angeles area (home of McCarty's restaurant, Michael's) and one in London, Paris or Geneva. After Europe, well, who knows?

What Michael and Jimmy *do* know is that with their restaurant theme ("fine dining can be exciting and fun"), management philosophy ("build a team based on respect and mutual trust; create a positive work environment; offer upward mobility; learn to delegate") and consummate good taste, they've been the first to open a

BELOW: Hail, hail, the gang's all here! Left to right—owner Michael McCarty, chef Keith Josefiak, chef-owner Jimmy Schmidt and staff gather in the dining room overlooking the Detroit River.



THE RATTLE SNAKE CLUB

Peppercorn Swordfish with Green Onion Sauce, Radishes and Chives

Spiced Baby Back Ribs with Barbecue Sauce

Roast Chicken with Achiote and Mustard

"Pressed" Chocolate Cake with Ice Cream and Hot Fudge Sauce

ABOVE: Innovative food served on exciting tableware is just one of the hallmarks of The Rattlesnake Club. Here, roast chicken, coated with a spicy cumin, mustard, achiote and parsley butter, is offered with crisp french fries.



ABOVE: Dressed for success, the infamous gang of three relaxes at the streamlined Rattlesnake bar.

BELOW: The handsome facade of the waterfront-manufacturing-building-turned-restaurant glimmers at the twilight hour.

“In terms of design . . . they’ve appropriated the Frank Lloyd Wright approach of bringing the outside in, both literally and figuratively.”

chain of innovative restaurants—restaurants that don’t impose themselves on their location but are defined by it.

As Jimmy says, “Our theme is carried from one place to another, but the look and style of setting and food are dictated by geography and culture. In Denver, we’re in an old brewery with a southwestern feel and spicy food. In Washington, D.C., it’s an old railroad station with a southeastern feel and lots of fish and shellfish. In Detroit, it’s an old manufacturing building with a midwestern feel and lots of lake fish. Sometimes the differences are more impressionistic than specific.”

As for specifics of the Detroit “Snake,” it had been five years in the making when it opened last June in its historic riverfront location. At the time Jimmy first discussed a restaurant project with the owner of the site, he was still the acclaimed chef of Detroit’s London Chop House. He left two years later to help open Denver’s Rattlesnake Club, with every intention of eventually returning home to open his own place. Instead, he and Michael became partners in the Rattlesnake venture, and this winning team brought their next restaurant to the Motor City.



In terms of design here, Jimmy talks about how they've appropriated the Frank Lloyd Wright approach of bringing the outside in, both literally and figuratively. They let it stream in through oversize water-facing windows; they mimic its spring and summer colors with a rich interior of cherrywood and maple, Italian green marble and glass; and the same interior supplies color in the winter months, when all of Michigan is blanketed in white.

Jimmy elaborates. "The look is very refined: natural light, unobstructed sightlines, Georg Jensen silver, Eliel Saarinen chairs covered in Missoni fabric and contemporary art."

The refinement continues in the kitchen, headed up by Keith Josefiak, who trained at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York. He met Jimmy at the London Chop House, then worked with him at the Denver Rattlesnake and was, as Jimmy puts it, "part of the reason it was such a success. So, we brought him here."

As in Denver, there's a restaurant and a grill room. The former offers more sophisticated fare, such as salmon carpaccio with mustard and capers, shellfish bisque, tenderloin of beef with

assorted mustards, and figs with pistachio ice cream. The latter offers more fun—dishes such as blue cheese wontons, smoked chicken and pepper pizza, a barbecued pork sandwich and chocolate ravioli with hazelnut sauce.

With the Rattlesnake, it seems like the sky's the limit. But how will that white chocolate ice cream with passion fruit sauce play on Mars?

PEPPERCORN SWORDFISH WITH GREEN ONION SAUCE, RADISHES AND CHIVES

Don't let the generous peppercorn coating throw you off; it's quite delicious and cooking tempers the heat.

4 servings

- 1 cup fish stock or bottled clam juice
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 1½ cups whipping cream
- 1 bunch green onions, green part only, coarsely chopped (about 1½ cups)
- ¼ cup cracked Szechwan peppercorns*

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ABOVE: Another delicious culinary creation: swordfish coated with black, white and Szechwan peppercorns, presented in a green onion sauce with grilled polenta. BELOW: What better—or more sinful—way to end a meal? A devilishly rich chocolate cake accompanied by hazelnut ice cream, both drizzled with a terrific hot fudge sauce.

