



## **A PASSION FOR PERFECTION**

*Chef proprietor Jose Martinez re-captures the Michelin Star magic of his Paris Restaurant Maison Balnche features "New French Cuisine" a bounty of classic French, the influences of modern America*

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### **BACKGROUNDER**

**Longboat Key – Sarasota FL - 2011 –** Chef Jose Martinez owned and operated the critically acclaimed Maison Blanche restaurant in Arrondissement 8 Paris and was awarded the coveted Michelin Star for outstanding culinary achievement. Maison Blanche of Longboat Key is his successful case study in the translation of classical French Cuisine into the 21<sup>st</sup> American century.

"Jose has a passion for food," said Victoria, his strikingly beautiful wife who commands the front of house responsibilities. "He is a perfectionist, in crafting, preparing and presenting his cuisine; his standards for quality and innovation are quite high."

This sentiment is shared by a majority of the food press and critical media in Florida and reflected in Chef Jose's (pronounced JO –zay) honor in 2010 of being nominated for Best Chef in the South by the James Beard Foundation, America's leading culinary organization. Chef Martinez's James Beard Foundation nomination coincided Maison Blanche's Zagat ratings, the highest combined total for any fine dining establishment within miles of Longboat Key at a commanding 27 rating for food and a 26 rating for service. Born in Morocco, Chef Martinez traveled in summer to Paris with his French mother and began his accomplished culinary career at age 17. A product of the Parisian culinary school accreditation process, Chef Martinez gathered his experience and skill set during his apprenticeships with Joel Robuchon, Alain Senderens, Michel Guerard.

"Cooking in Paris and Provance, is an education in itself." Chef Martinez says. "My culinary foundation is classical French but my innovation, the test of my skills is in melding the American influences. It is very exciting and my clientele have supported me in this process."



His cuisine is clean and concise, a defined palette of ingredients. Classical French and modern American influences are merged. Flavor is created based in tradition with accompaniments and accents regularly changing with the seasons.

Chef Jose's contemporary interpretations of French cookery balance a minimum of ingredients with a maximum of taste. The signature dishes are indicative of the pursuit of perfection, producing an authentic taste *A lobster risotto of Arborio, Maine lobster and a bisque sauce, Braised Sweetbreads accompanied by caramelized endives and beet juice, Roasted Suckling Pig served with sautéed young spinach and basil. For dessert there is a perfect Napoleon, filled with lemon cream and raspberry coulis; and the bread and ice cream are hand-made, every day at the restaurant.*

"My past and any success is only a foundation for my vision," added chef Martinez. "I am the alchemist, who manages to conjure precious product from ordinary elements."

His hospitality philosophy is rooted in a belief that a dining experience is extremely personal, it is restoring, entertaining, fulfilling and if executed properly, creates a memory. This a principal reason to create as beautiful and elegant a dining environment that his resources would allow. The result is a serenely elegant dining room which is nearly as acclaimed as his haute cuisine. Designed by the celebrated and award winning architect Franck Hammoutene, it is a comfortable room of minimalism theatre with mid-century modern design elements, contemporary art and a unique balance that is at once stark and tranquil. Having the room integrate with the dining experience is important to chef Martinez.

"Our guest must be comfortable in their seat to be curious and follow the adventure in all food," explained chef Martinez. "The goal is satisfaction. Every meal must satisfy or it is a failure."

Chef Martinez has instituted a 'sustainability' philosophy for Maison Blanche, employing local growers and purveyors, for the freshest possible ingredients.



“It is actually a privilege to be cooking in such interesting times as these in the United States,” said the chef, acknowledging a concerted effort among chefs and food providers to focus on long term solutions and sustainable agriculture. While circumstances at times do not allow for a complete composition of fresh farm goods, his proactive stance with local growers and regional and national artesian growers is leading him to that ultimate goal.

“With all my heart, I am a chef committed to sustainability and to producing Farm to Table plated food,” said chef Martinez. “I will always work to keep my promise of ‘fresh, local and sustainable’ in my finished plates.”

Maison Blanche Restaurant will re-present itself to the local media and to its guests and core clientele in a series of on site events that will feature his cuisine paired with Wine & Spirits. A National campaign and introduction to the Industry Press is also planned for next Fall capped with a James Beard House Dinner. The chef explained the purpose for re-introducing Maison Blanche is to focus on the positive support and reaction he has received, to introduce new dining components such as his Chef’s Table and to focus on his upcoming tenth anniversary.

“We always want to challenge our offer,” he explained, “consistently excellent with the freshest and best ingredients available, an inventive presentation, a beautiful environment and the spirit of classical French in every savory morsel, in every sip of wine. That is a satisfying dining experience.”

His Paris establishment, Maison Blanche Arrondissement 8 is among the finest restaurants of France earning a Michelin star. Chef Martinez arrived in The United States in March 2002 and considered opening a restaurant in New York or Los Angeles. A brief vacation and curiosity visit to Longboat Key settled the matter for Jose and Victoria.

“We believed this would be an idyllic place to run a family restaurant and raise our children,” he said .



Chef Martinez acquired a non-descript location to set upon his dream in 2002 in the Four Winds Resort on Longboat Key and succeeded in creating one of the country's most elegant restaurants. Using extraordinary good taste and an elegant Minimalistic vision, the chef and his wife created the environment to house their dream as one of Florida's most sophisticated restaurants. In the 9 years since its beginning, Chef Martinez and Maison Blanche have received high accolade from the hospitality industry. With his renewed involvement in presenting a new level in day-to-day operations at Maison Blanche, Chef Martinez is now energetically expanding his plans. When asked why he has remained adamant on any reproduction or relocation of Maison Blanche to Manhattan or Los Angeles, the chef is clear and true.

"We are an option for excellence right here in Florida. Even in troubled times there is a food and restaurant renaissance evolving in the South and much of it here in Florida. I feel that I am an important part of that renaissance. I am proud of that fact"

Nine years later, Maison Blanche is among only a handful of elite restaurants in the Sarasota – Tampa area, a small restaurant but a foodie institution and destination.

"I plan on a celebration for my tenth year anniversary next year," said Chef Martinez. "This will commence the next ten years for my loyal clientele, patrons and the culinary industry."

Perfect.

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