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FOOD

Visiting chefs import fresh ideas

A stellar roster of culinary guests from around the world coming to Vancouver this year

LUCY HYSLOP
SPECIAL TO THE SUN

It's generally accepted that the kitchen is a chef's inner sanctum. It's where they master hectic, stressful services in close quarters with staff and deftly know every nuance of their equipment – from the slightest fluctuation of a stove, for example, to the subtleties of coveted culinary gadgets.

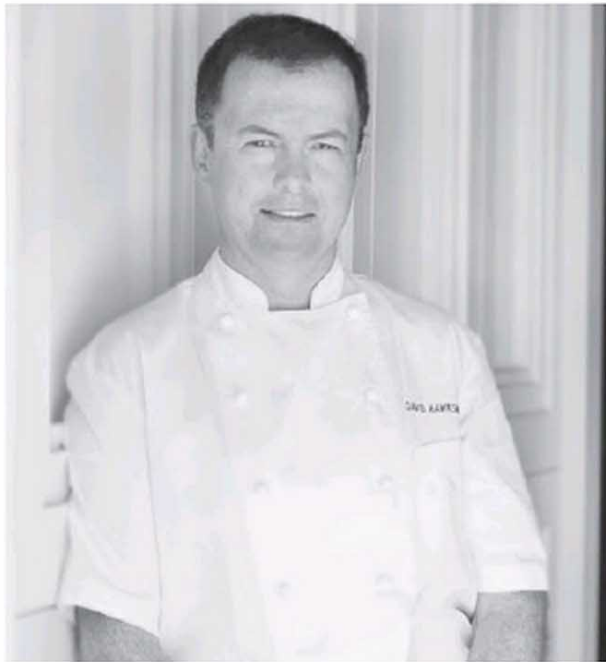
So, when it comes to inviting in another chef to that intimate epicentre, little wonder they offer their “babies” only to those they trust. Thankfully, there seems to be a whole lot of trust around Vancouver, where the start of 2013 already sees a stellar guest-chef roster heading to B.C.

The motive behind the practice is, obviously, simple. What better way to introduce customers – as well as chefs – to a wider serving of fresh culinary chops? That's the thinking of David Hawksworth, owner/chef of Hawksworth restaurant at Vancouver's Rosewood Hotel Georgia, who is bringing in Philip Howard, head chef and co-owner of the two-Michelin-starred The Square in London.

The invitation to create a six-course menu, running Feb. 28 and March 1, is personal: The Square is one of the restaurants where Hawksworth worked during his 10 years in the English capital, so he knows well Howard's style of modern French cooking. “It's world-class food that I'm sure our customers will appreciate,” he states succinctly of the lineup that will include in-season fish, meat and produce. “It will be very interesting to see him in here. I'm proud of what we've achieved and what is happening on the culinary scene in Vancouver.”

(Other guest chefs being brought in at various intervals throughout the year are set to include David Kinch of Manresa, the California restaurant that also boasts two Michelin stars.)

While he's looking forward to working again with Hawksworth and to seeing “this beast” of a restaurant that he's set up, Howard knows hitting the ground running in a new kitchen isn't always easy and clearly all the behind-the-scenes work that's involved makes their pulling off the event even more



David Hawksworth, left, of Vancouver's Hawksworth Restaurant, has invited British chef Phil Howard, right, to be guest chef Feb. 28 and March 1.

significant.

For months, the pair has been working on creating an “intelligent menu – one that is achievable from a complexity point of view and using ingredients that are going to work,” says Howard. While he may call on his degree in microbiology for a scientific nod to cooking, the acclaimed chef says he generally shoots for “simplicity” in his recipes: Not “bizarre combinations that are all ego-driven,” adds the winner of the Chef's Chef of the Year 2012 at the U.K.'s National Restaurant Awards. “I'm motivated to cook food that I hope is utterly delicious.”

But even with all the planning, obviously the chef will be outside of his own surroundings in Vancouver. “I always feel disproportionately uncomfortable being in somebody else's kitchen because you're not familiar

with it; it's a challenge,” says Howard, who notably overcame a drug addiction in his early years as a chef and has now clocked up 21 years at The Square. “Kitchens can be fractious, busy, relentless places and there's a potential for it to get hairy.”

(Not that Hawksworth thinks Howard need worry on that front: While cooking under him at The Square was a “breath of fresh air,” Hawksworth explains the U.K. was generally, needless to say, a much tougher environment than Vancouver. “Almost on a daily basis in London, I saw a pan flying or someone calling someone something really harsh. Here, it just doesn't happen,” he says, laughing. “There's little of that London agro here – we're so laid-back here we're barely awake.”)

Over at West restaurant in South

Guess who's cooking dinner?

Chef Philip Howard, of the two Michelin-starred The Square in London, will cook a six-course tasting menu at Hawksworth Restaurant at Rosewood Hotel Georgia, 801 W. Georgia St., Vancouver, on Feb. 28 and March 1 (hawksworthrestaurant.com; 604-673-7000). Costs \$175 per person, including a personalized copy of The Square, The Cookbook, Volume 1: Savoury by Phil Howard.

Connie DeSousa and John Jackson of Calgary's Charcut Roast House will join chef Ned Bell for West Coast cuisine with a twist: Surf 'n Turf themed dinner at Yew restaurant in the Four Seasons Hotel (791 W. Georgia St., Vancouver;

yewrestaurant.com) on March 9. (The event is open to Visa Infinite cardholders; call 1-888-711-9399.) The price is \$145 (seafood raw bar to start followed by five courses).

Geoff Rogers and Matthew Stowe, from Top Chef Canada (season three), will be cooking at Fable (1944 West Fourth Ave., Vancouver; 604-732-1322; fablekitchen.ca) on March 31. Four courses for \$100.

Chef Quang Dang is gathering yet-to-be-announced chefs for another guest-chef season at West, 2881 Granville St., Vancouver (604-738-8938; westrestaurant.com)

