

RANCH & COAST

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Sweet Sensations

VALENTINE IDEAS LOVELY LINGERIE
GORGEOUS JEWELS DESSERTS OF DESIRE
FOOD TO GET YOU IN THE MOOD JEANNE JONES

Dining Out: Bertrand At Mister A's

You may remember the news making local headlines in 2000 when Bertrand Hug, *restrauteur extraordinaire* and proprietor of Mille Fleurs in Rancho Santa Fe, acquired the San Diego landmark restaurant, Mister A's. After all, the restaurant is a bit of a relic.

With the help of designer David Robinson, Hug transformed the once red velvet, red leather, and red-carpeted dining room into an elegant, toned-down chic hangout with a big-city feel. (And I haven't even mentioned the views.) In a strong contrast to the old Mister A's, Robinson and Hug selected muted wall colors, understated fabrics, and clean lines, thus allowing the floor to ceiling views of Balboa Park, downtown, and San Diego Bay to steal the show. ✦

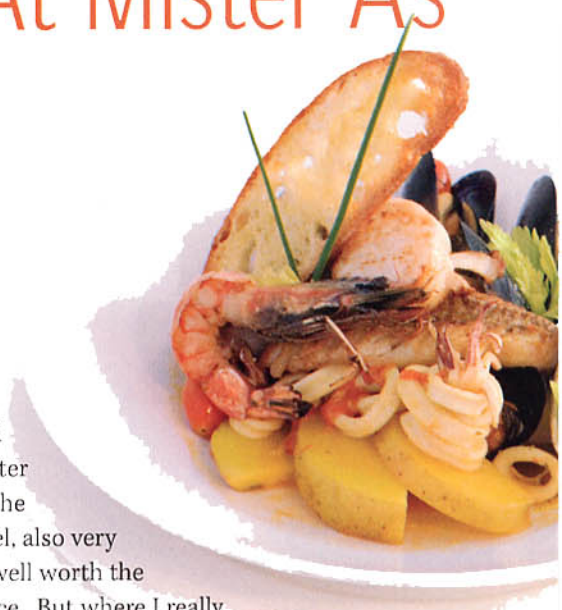
Servers will tell you that it is unusual if there isn't at least one marriage proposal a night — the room is that romantic.

Executive chef Stephane Voitzwinkler, who prior to Mister A's was executive chef at Sally's Restaurant, is originally from the Alsace Lorraine region of France and began his career in the United States at Marius Restaurant at the former Le Meridian Hotel in Coronado.

The cuisine is French-accented American. There are so many wonderful items on the starters list that, believe me, you'll have trouble choosing. Layered tuna ahi, house-cured gravlax, caviar, and Maine lobster salad all tempted me but I succumbed to the richer (and more fattening, I'm sure) selections.



The lobster bisque is served traditionally with a puffed pastry lid and plenty of lobster chunks, and the lobster strudel, also very decadent, is well worth the \$20 ticket price. But where I really blew my appetite for dinner was on the truffle macaroni and cheese with pancetta. While no one forced me to inhale it, I couldn't resist. The mini elbow pasta is coated in the perfect amount of earthy-tasting cured ham and cheese sauce and served slightly bubbling in a diminutive copper pot.



Continuing along the path of big flavor and woodsy sauces, I ordered the veal medallions. They are served with crispy sautéed sweetbreads smothered in a morel cream sauce. The dish is served with a side of pan-fried truffle spaetzel, which are fabulous lolling around in the morel sauce.

For all you cardiologists out there, don't worry about your arteries, you can wash all this down with a glass of Robert Sinskey Cabernet Sauvignon.

If you feel like a splurge, another must-do dish is the Maine lobster trio. The claws are served tempura style, and the body is steamed, served in the shell, and finished with a light chive *beurre blanc*. The trio is completed with a lobster mousse stuffed squash blossom and garnished with housemade waffle potato chips. You might want to skip the aforementioned macaroni and cheese if you choose this entrée. The lobster is quite something and you won't want to leave even one bite.

Throughout the evening, Hug can be seen gracing the room with his affable presence, shaking hands while addressing his guests by first name, kissing their wives, and keeping a watchful eye on his attentive staff — all the while looking cool, calm, and glamorous. Didn't I say the room was romantic? (619/239-1377) — Paisley Wood