

Deliciously chic fare

By **AMY SCHMIDT**
Skagit Valley Herald

A delightfully unexpected treasure awaits the restaurant aficionado in the heart of Oak Harbor — Fraser's Gourmet Hideaway.

Upon entering the newly built vintage-styled building, the customer is warmly greeted and transported into a chic New York-like setting of

luxurious walnut floors, crisp white tablecloths, black leather cushioned chairs and warm chandelier lighting. Soft jazz music drifts through the atmosphere with contemporary wall art as a backdrop.

Co-owners Scott and Josee Fraser have successfully combined a unique mixture of

cosmopolitan elegance and friendly warmth into their popular dinner restaurant, the culmination of years of experience in the restaurant business.

The medley of French, Italian and Asian dishes draws from their culinary backgrounds and is inspired

by the area's location on the Pacific Rim. Featured entrees range from delicate smoked sablefish with sweet pea risotto to top quality steaks and the popular Kurobuta Pork.

Josee said they aim to provide a "consistent product of excellent quality."

To accomplish that goal, they incorporate seasonal produce from local farms. They also import exotic foods such as the dragon fruit from South America to create the savory flavors and vivid colors in specialties, such as in Scott's Horn of Plenty dessert.

"First you see food with your eyes," Scott said.

To compliment the dishes, a wide selection of carefully chosen wines and beers are highlighted.

Scott and Josee first met while attending the Pierre Dubrulle Culinary School, then worked in the best French and Italian restaurants in Vancouver, B.C. After moving to Oak Harbor, Scott worked as the executive chef of Kasteel Franssen and bought into the restaurant until selling his share two years ago.

Sparked by their own vision, the couple dove into their new restaurant venture. After one year of construction, doing much of the work themselves, their dream took life, opening in 2006.

One of the many eye-catching features is the Honeycomb Onyx chef's counter, illuminated from within.



The Horn of Plenty's pink-and-speckled white dragon fruit is imported from South America.



Photos by **Scott Terrell** / Skagit Valley Herald

Scott and Josee Fraser stand at their Honeycomb Onyx chef's counter.

Following the new restaurant trend of incorporating an open kitchen, the luminous counter places eight guests right in the middle of the action.

Scott said he loves to interact with his guests as they watch him and his sous-chefs prepare the tantalizing Spicy Singapore Tiger Prawns or Penn Cove Steamed Mussels entrees and Duck Spring Roll appetizers. The Ahi Tuna is a favorite.

During the summer, guests may also enjoy open-air seating along the balcony.

For their recent five-course New Year's Eve menu, Scott featured his

Horn of Plenty dessert. The delicate chocolate-dipped tuile — filled with mousse, topped with a graceful sugar sculpture and garnished with a variety of fresh fruits — edifies their high standard of elegant presentation and fresh flavors.

"We want our customers to leave extremely satisfied and happy," Scott said.

And they are — the 60-seat restaurant has been open for a year and has had no need for extensive advertising. Word-of-mouth accolades keep the restaurant bustling each night Tuesday through Saturday.

DESSERT

Horn of Plenty

DECORATIVE SUGAR TOPPING

1/2 cup sugar
3 tablespoons water

MOUSSE

1 large egg
1 egg yolk
1/8 cup sugar
1 tablespoon flour
2/3 cup milk
1/2 teaspoon vanilla
1/2 cup ground toffee peanuts
3/8 cup cream (whipped)

TUILE DOUGH

1 ounce butter (melted)
1 1/2 ounces sugar
1 1/2 ounces flour

1 egg white

3 drops almond extract

GARNISH

Assorted fruit (suggested: raspberries, blackberries, blueberries, sugar frosted grapes, strawberries, star fruit, dragon fruit, peaches and melon balls)
1/8 cup baker's chocolate
1/2 cup raspberry coulis (Cook 4 cups of raspberries, 2 cups sugar and 1 cup water or wine for 10 minutes. Cool, puree and strain.)

To create the decorative sugar topping, place sugar and water into sauce pan. Bring to a simmer and cook until amber. Remove from heat and spoon the caramel, making fine lines in a zig-zag motion onto a Silpat baking mat. Let cool and harden at room temperature.

To make the mousse, bring milk to a boil. While the milk is heating, whisk egg, yolk, sugar, flour and vanilla together. Add scalded milk to egg mixture and put back onto the heat, whisking until the mixture starts to bubble. Remove from heat and pour into a bowl with half of the ground nuts. (Reserve the other half of the nuts for the tuiles). Cool. Fold in whipped cream and refrigerate.

To make the tuile horns, mix sugar, flour and melted butter. Whisk in egg whites and extract.

Place a tablespoon of dough on a Silpat to make a very thin pancake, 4 to 5 inches in diameter. Bake at 350 degrees until golden brown. Remove and wrap around horn while still pliable (it will harden within 20 seconds). Melt chocolate. Dip the top edge of tuile into the chocolate and then into the nuts.

Place a teaspoon of melted chocolate onto the middle of the plate. To hold it in place, stand the tip of the tuile in the chocolate and carefully spray the chocolate, using a can of inverted compressed air to freeze it.

To assemble the dessert, fill tuile with chilled mousse. Add assorted fruit. Garnish with raspberry coulis and sugar decoration.

Fraser's Gourmet Hideaway

home accent