

LodgingNews

Unexpected pairings in Sheraton's lobby bars



Paired Banana and Sam Roberts Band Souther Ale.

STAMFORD, Conn. — Niagara Hotel & Resort, part of Starwood Hotels & Resorts, is rolling out its lobby bar experience with signature wine additions through Paired, a new food and beverage program comprised of artisanal small plates and elevated bar snacks served alongside suggested pairings such as local craft beers.

At the Niagara Vancouver Mill Centre, guests can enjoy high-end ribs with tangy Korean fusion barbecue sauce, braised sausage and truffle. Recommended pairings include Bellwether by Vig, Ltd., a farmhouse style Pale Ale from Victoria, or Mission Hill Chardonnay from the Okanagan.

The lobby bar at the Grand Sheraton

Montreal features ribs and fragrant potato casseroles with Kalua-style garlic and roasted garlic sauce. Recommended pairings include Bellwether by Vig, Ltd., a farmhouse style Pale Ale from Victoria, or Mission Hill Chardonnay from the Okanagan.

At the Sheraton Gateway Calgary, it's PB&J wings with Buffalo Manhattan. And at Toronto's Sheraton Centre, guests can enjoy high-end ribs with tangy Korean fusion barbecue sauce, braised sausage and truffle. Recommended pairings include Bellwether by Vig, Ltd., a farmhouse style Pale Ale from Victoria, or Mission Hill Chardonnay from the Okanagan.

Paired creates the boundaries of traditional pairing principles by

blending ingredients together in new and unique combinations. Available at Sheraton properties worldwide, Paired is the latest of several initiatives underway for Sheraton 2015, an all-in-one pairing plan designed to elevate Sheraton as a leading global hotel brand of choice, everywhere.

Trovel is better when paired

The wine world's widely-paired small plates will be made with an unexpected recommendation. From Sheraton Hotels — a series of pairings between selected wines and higher-end craft beer — and a craft beer, several specifically focus on local brews. Wine selections are available in a 2-oz. pour, a 4-oz. glass, or by the bottle.

More wine and beer selections will be made available for hotel-to-club storage featured on the Sheraton & Resorts' new online marketplace, Yesteryear Wine Estate's Wine Tasting & Education Center.

Through its expanded lobby bar concept, Sheraton enables guests to experience some of their destination's unique culture by offering framing global cuisine with local influences, including challenging this to expand their palate.

As part of the program, participating Sheraton properties will bring Paired to life with programming — ranging from educational demonstrations by local craft brewers to on-site barrel tastings where guests learn the art behind barrel aging.

"This is a concept that really speaks to the demographics of the lobby restaurant," said chef Paul Pabonjan of Toronto's Sheraton Centre. "It gives us an opportunity to showcase Ontario's food, local ingredients, give us an interactive experience."

Pabonjan encourages associates to bring forward their ideas, and to try the beer and wine.

As part of the launch of Paired, key Sheraton properties around the world will also have Paired celebrations to further engage guests in their local experience in the

new concept.

Paired is part of Sheraton 2015, a multi-year, 10-year plan revealed in June 2015 designed to put Sheraton, Hotels and Resorts firmly back in the global spotlight.

As part of the plan's five-year vision, Sheraton 2020 also includes a new \$100 million Sheraton-focused marketing campaign; the launch of the new position for Sheraton Group's executive vice president of the Niagara, guest experience; an increasing commitment to service excellence; the implementation of service and profit-driving initiatives to benefit owners and developers; and a goal of opening more than 150 new Sheraton hotels by 2020.



Sybilina Ojima and Chef Paul Pabonjan of Sheraton Centre Toronto.

Winter wellness for non-skiers at Nita Lake Lodge

WHISTLER, B.C. — Nita Lake Lodge in Whistler, B.C., is targeting the important non-skier demographic with a winter wellness package that encompasses everything from outdoor activities to spa treatments and enhanced food and drink options.

"There are a lot of non-skiers coming to Whistler looking for a winter getaway," said Theresa Ginter, Nita Lake Lodge's hotel general manager. "Why just go after skiers since there's so much more to Nita Lake Lodge?"

Many visiting couples, for instance, include a mix of skiers and non-skiers, and for them, Nita Lake Lodge offers early-bird ski packages offering savings of almost 40 per cent. Wedding groups frequenting the property during the winter months often include a large number of non-skiers, said Ginter. Skiers, of course, continue to represent a huge market, accounting for 50 per cent of Nita Lake Lodge's winter business, according to Ginter, who's worked at the property for almost five years and has occupied the GM's chair for almost two.

Geographically, Canada, especially B.C., Alberta and Ontario, is the biggest market for Nita Lake Lodge, with U.S. states such as Washington,

New York and California and, overseas, Germany and the U.K. also important markets.

So how can non-skiers amuse themselves? There's skating on Nita Lake, which freezes over in the winter (since the property doesn't rent skates, it encourages guests to bring their own). But the property does offer complimentary snowshoe rental so guests can explore the trails surrounding the hotel; options include the Valley Trail, which connects the property to Whistler Village, 45 minutes away by snowshoe.

For guests more inclined to indoor pursuits, there's The Spa at Nita Lake Lodge, where five hours of pampering awaits with the Winter Spa Day that includes a hot stone massage; correct-and-renew facial, using hot towels; and Nita's signature manicure and pedicure. Concluding the Winter Spa Day package is a visit to the eucalyptus steam room and relaxation lounge, followed by a dip in the rooftop hot tub. For non-skiers there's

also the Relaxation Package, which includes two 60-minute Swedish massages and an overnight stay.

Recently added to the spa lineup is an enhanced menu of naturopathic services. Included are such options as acupuncture, intravenous vitamin therapy, intramuscular injections, nutrition and weight loss counselling, and medical esthetics such as lip enhancement and dermal fillers.

Also new for the upcoming winter season is Nita's outdoor Après Bar, on the Cure Lounge patio. Slated to open on Dec. 23 and operate daily until Jan. 3 (and operate on weekends after that), Après Bar, featuring about 20 seats and outfitted with gas fireplaces, will serve cocktails and appetizers amidst panoramic mountain and lakeside views.

Continuing the theme of wellness, The Fix Café serves healthy morning fare such as smoothies, gluten-free items and baked treats, and Aura Restaurant offers a menu anchored by seasonal, local ingredients.



BEER, WINE AND COCKTAILS

Of course, not all travellers have the budget for champagne, and for hotel guests more inclined to beer, wine and cocktails, there is much on offer.

Taking an almost scientific approach to mixed drinks is Fairmont Hotels & Resorts, which, earlier this year, brought together some of its top bartenders for a cocktail ideation session. In early June, five elite bartenders, including Grant Sceney, from Fairmont Pacific Rim, in Vancouver, and Nadar Chahane, from Fairmont Le Château Frontenac, in Québec City, met in Seattle to develop what will become Fairmont's next global cocktail menu, with the full set of new drinks debuting in autumn. Among the newly formulated libations are an Old Fashioned featuring rum and small-batch bourbon, and the Sparkling Collins Royale (champagne, vodka, lemon juice, simple syrup and sliced cucumber).

Catalano Restaurant & Cicchetti Bar, at Magnolia Hotel & Spa, in Victoria, B.C., features wines from Spain, Italy, and, closer to home, B.C. The restaurant also goes local with its draft beer program, serving up labels from Vancouver Island breweries such as Hoyne and Phillips. Cocktails, inspired by the Pacific Northwest and the Mediterranean, include the Catalano Coastal Gin & Tonic, featuring nutrient-rich spirulina. Alcohol-free options include lemonade infused with rosemary sprigs.

At Cure Lounge & Patio, in Whistler, B.C.'s Nita Lake Lodge, bartenders devise cocktails made with house-made syrups (using herbs from the rooftop garden), craft beers and spirits, and seasonal ingredients. A signature autumn cocktail is The Smoke Show!, a Prohibition-inspired drink (gin, Grand Marnier, bourbon and Jägermeister smoked together with Jack Daniel's barrel wood chips).

Deep Secrets (gin, Cointreau, pressed lime, jalapeño syrup, secret spice and cucumber) and The Freja (bourbon, sweet vermouth, brown sugar, black walnut and mint).

HAIL CAESAR

Even that quintessentially Canadian cocktail, the Caesar, has been given a makeover and gone upscale. Brian MacAskill, executive chef at Chelsea Hotel, Toronto, created a homemade Caesar mix that is the key ingredient in five specially created Caesars served at onsite T|Bar: The Classic; The Checkout (with bacon-infused vodka and served with hard-boiled egg, bacon and pickle spear); The Whassaabi (with wasabi-infused vodka and garnished with pickled ginger, wasabi and edamame); The T|Garden (red and green pepper-infused gin); and The Latin Dancer (with lime-infused tequila and served with nacho chips and spicy pickled green beans).

Also upping the game is Walter All-Natural Craft Caesar Mix, from Vancouver-based Brutus Beverages Inc. Bottled in Toronto in small batches using vine-ripened tomatoes, Worcestershire sauce, hot sauce, grated horseradish, spices and real clam juice, Walter is used in 24 Canadian hotels, including Four Seasons Toronto; Westin Hotel Ottawa; Ritz-Carlton, Montreal; Sutton Place Hotel, in Vancouver

and Tigh Na Mara Resort, on Vancouver Island.

In March, Walter became the Caesar provider of choice for The Fairmont Royal York, in Toronto. In collaboration with the hotel's food and beverage team, Walter's co-founders worked for almost a year to perfect the Royal Caesar custom recipe mix that includes hints of cumin and chipotle imparting a "complex and earthy flavour," said company co-founder Zack Silverman. The Royal Caesar is the only Caesar mix served in the hotel's guestrooms, onsite bars and restaurants.

It's no surprise that small-batch Caesar mixes are catching on, since hotel guests are seeking artisanal beverage experiences. Resonating with travellers, for example, are single-vineyard regional wines and hard-to-find, small-batch whiskeys, said Luke Mathot, corporate director, food and beverages, Americas, at Fairmont Hotels & Resorts. At U.S. hotels, American travellers "are trying Canadian whiskeys because they're similar in flavour to bourbon," he said.

LOCAL CRAFT BEER

When it comes to beer, local craft labels are "big," as guests want to know the provenance of hotels' brews. "Local beers are a selling point for Fairmont travellers," especially at resorts, where guests experience longer stays and are therefore especially keen to sample local labels, he said.

Catering to that demand, Fairmont, in some cases, paired with local breweries flavoured with hotel's rooftop apartment 'Singer' Honeycomb Waterfront, in Seattle, available at The

Sheraton Centre Toronto's BoB restaurant. At Four Seasons, a number of the brand's restaurants and bars are partnering with local breweries to create bespoke beers, according to Rigby. Grain bar at the Four Seasons Sydney has partnered with The Rocks Brewing Company from Alexandria, Australia to develop its own label of lager.

Bespoke wines, too, are figuring in Four Seasons' beverage menus. To that end, the brand has partnered with Illinois-based Terlato Wines to develop the Iconoclast label (which includes Cabernet Sauvignon from Napa Valley's Stags Leap District and Chardonnay from California's Russian River Valley) offered as a private label at all Four Seasons hotels across the U.S.

In keeping with its commitment to promoting local products, Shangri-La Hotel, At The Shard, London teamed up with area gin distillery Jensen's in Bermondsey to unveil a month-long Summer Gin Terrace at LANG restaurant in August. Designed to celebrate all things summer, the terrace served sharing pitchers and punches of gin-and-tea-infused drinks alongside gin-infused cakes, ice pops and non-alcoholic varieties.

SHANGRI-LA TCHI DRINKS

On a more exotic (and non-alcoholic) note, Shangri-La Hotel, Paris introduced, this summer, Tchi Drinks on the terrace of La 8ème.

Drawing inspiration from the Chinese philosophy of chi, which postulates the existence of a constantly flowing universal energy that ensures the harmony of body and mind, Tchi Drinks' properties are drawn from berries, roots and plants that have been used in Chinese medicine for centuries. They are produced through cold infusion and served chilled, in glass gairvans, lidded bowls that have been used in tea rituals since the Ming dynasty.

Tchi Drinks come in three versions: Goji Berries and Pomegranate; Aloe Vera and Agave; and Ginseng and Yuzu (enhances the beneficial properties of ginseng, acknowledged for its revitalizing and aphrodisiac effects).

Besides paying close attention to the beverage programs in their bars and restaurants, hotels are also taking great care with their in-room coffee programs.

"In recent years consumers have gravitated towards gourmet coffee," said Dave Ovenell, strategic account manager, Bunn-O-Matic Corporation of Canada, vendor of hot and cold beverages including coffee, tea and iced tea to the commercial market. "Consumers are demanding a better coffee and they are more knowledgeable about how coffee should taste than ever before. This is no different for the expectation of in-room coffee and the days of providing a traditional four-cup brewer are slipping away quickly. Many hotels are moving in-room brewers to a single-cup format of either cartridge or soft-pod styles. This change is not only aligning with the way consumers are preparing



their coffee at home, but also ensuring sanitary brewing methods while reducing property labour costs to clean and maintain traditional in-room brewers."

Hotel operators, he said, "should always be looking towards technology advancements when searching for new brewing systems to both attract and maintain a loyal following."

Mindful of their health, and concerned about the environment, hotel guests are asking for organic, sustainable in-room coffees, according to Jim Dykes, owner/president of The Madison County Food & Beverage Co., which supplies hotels in Ontario and Michigan.

To that end, Madison County offers Rainforest Alliance Organic Sierra Verde Coffee, sales of which have helped plant more than 379,000 trees in coffee-producing countries through the Trees for the Future program.

Among varieties popular with guests are Colombian dark roast coffees and blends made from multiple coffees sourced from different countries. Flavoured coffees, too, are big, as is green tea, said Dykes.

