

## The Wigwam's Arizona Kitchen



CHRIS BASSETT (9)

Once upon a time, many years ago, there was a little lodge surrounded by cotton fields and cactus. In those days, the humble lodge welcomed its guests to enjoy the beauty and bounty of the Sonoran Desert. Those visitors so enjoyed the Southwestern charm they found at the lodge, they fondly christened it "The Wigwam." Over the years, its reputation spread far and wide until The Wigwam grew into a legendary luxury resort known for its authentic Arizona hospitality and award-winning dining – the Mobil Four-Star, AAA Four-Diamond-rated Arizona Kitchen restaurant.

Lucky for today's diners, Arizona Kitchen at the Wigwam Resort & Golf Club is no fairy tale. Showcasing authentic Arizona fare, sous chef John Conrad combines the finest indigenous Southwestern ingredients with classic techniques to continue a grand dining tradition.

Housed in one of The Wigwam's adobe buildings, Arizona Kitchen welcomes guests with a warm ambience. Rich brick flooring, an adobe fireplace and an exhibition kitchen featuring a mesquite wood-fired hearth and grill let diners know they're in for an authentic Arizona experience.

Drawing on talent and tradition, Conrad and his crew combine the freshest meats, seafood, fruits and vegetables with Southwest elements to create memorable dishes. The restaurant is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, offering guests a taste of Arizona at every meal.

Dishes like Duck Confit Tamales with Roasted Corn and Poblano Relish and Maryland Lump Crab Cake served with Chayote Jicama Slaw and Grilled Pineapple Mojo satisfy a heritage rich in flavor and Sonoran style. An authentically Arizona dining experience continues with entrees like Mesquite Grilled Pork Tenderloin with White Sweet Potato Puree, Salsa Calabazita and Posole Rojo, as well as Pepita Crusted Ahi Tuna with Charred Tomatillo Salsa. Any meal at Arizona Kitchen has a happy ending with the Arizona Trio, featuring flan, a chocolate taco and Banana Horneada.

Celebrating its 75th anniversary this year, The Wigwam has become an Arizona legacy. The award-winning Arizona Kitchen proudly offers a warm and inviting place to enjoy the finest in Southwest dining – a tradition that, no doubt, will live happily ever after.

**Arizona Kitchen**  
The Wigwam Resort & Golf Club  
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Litchfield Park, AZ 85340  
623-935-3811

## chef & answer question

**John Conrad**

**PM: Arizona Kitchen is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Do all the menus focus on Southwestern food?**

JC: They all have Southwestern elements. For example, for breakfast we prepare a delicious sweet potato waffle with honey butter and prickly pear preserves. We also make a wonderful cowboy hash prepared with house-made chorizo, country sausage, apples and potatoes.

**PM: You started your career in a pizzeria, so do you still make pizza?**

JC: For lunch, we make a Wood Oven Fired Flatbread with grilled vegetables, wild mushrooms, oven-roasted tomatoes and caramelized onions. We cook it in our mesquite wood-fired hearth.

**PM: How often do you change the menu?**

JC: We change it seasonally. We just finished our summer menu, adding items like a Chef's Daily Creation of chilled summer soups.

**PM: What dish never changes on your menu?**

JC: That would be the Mesquite Smoked Corn Chowder. It's our signature soup. We top it with an image of a wigwam and cactus painted with nopales puree and red pepper sauce.

**PM: What's your favorite kitchen tool?**

JC: Our mesquite wood grill. The cowboys cooked over mesquite on an open fire and we fire ours up every morning and feed it mesquite



all day. It produces a great smoky flavor.

**PM: How do you feel about working in such a legendary setting?**

JC: The Wigwam has such a great history and our take on Southwestern cuisine allows us to use ingredients that have been used for 400 years. Researching the whys and hows of those ingredients adds another dimension. In short, it's great.

## chef close-up

The most memorable Christmas for chef John Conrad was the year he received an Easy Bake Oven and a Red Ryder BB Gun.

"Guess which one I played with more?" Conrad asks. Always underfoot in the family kitchen, Conrad says his parents solved the problem by getting him the Easy Bake. "My brother and sister were my guinea pigs," he adds. "I used to make them eat everything I baked in it."

As a seasoned 12-year-old, Conrad received on-the-job training, learning the art of baking bread in the restaurant where his parents worked. "It was a nice introduction to working in a restaurant kitchen," he says.

Throughout his high school years, Conrad continued working in restaurants and eventually apprenticed at The Ritz-Carlton in Rancho Mirage. After a five-year stint with California Pizza Kitchen, Conrad moved to

the Valley to attend Scottsdale Culinary Institute. Working his way through school, he earned his stripes at T. Cook's at Royal Palms Resort and Spa.

"I did about everything there, from butcher to lead line cook," he recalls.

Not one to sit still, Conrad has traveled extensively throughout Central and South America and last summer spent some time in France and Spain learning local culinary traditions.

These days, Conrad serves as sous chef at the Mobil Four-Star, AAA Four-Diamond Arizona Kitchen. He also finds time to work with students at Estrella Foothills High School, helping them develop their culinary talents.

"I really enjoy working with the students," he explains. "It's my way of passing on knowledge to help them succeed."

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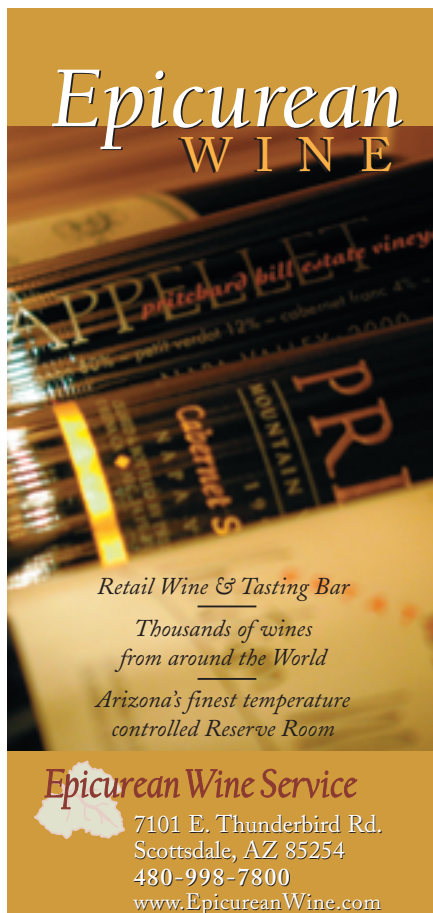
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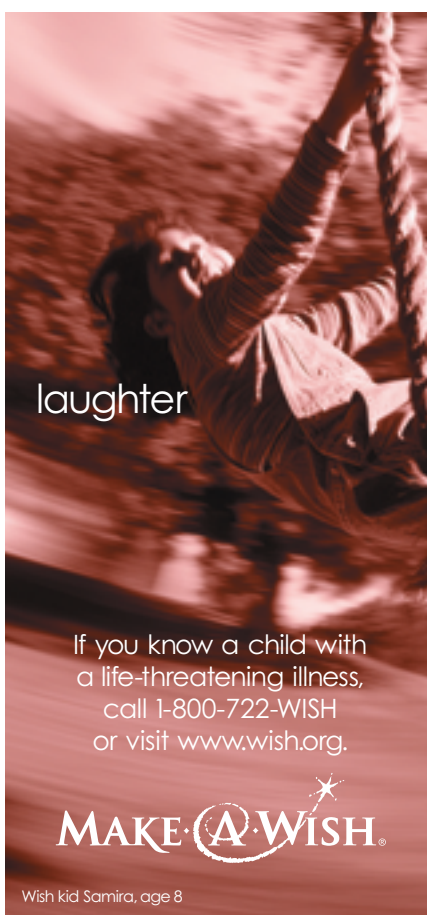
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## Tamarind Honey-Glazed Duck and Foie Gras Corn Bread Pudding

(Serves 6)

**John Conrad, sous chef**  
**The Wigwam's Arizona Kitchen**

- 2 duck breasts
- 4 baby carrots
- 2 baby gold beets
- 1/2 loaf day-old corn bread, cut 1/2-inch thick
- 4 eggs, beaten slightly
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 7 ounces foie gras, three pieces  
cut 1/2-inch thick
- 1 tablespoon ancho chile, ground
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg, ground
- 3 tablespoons tamarind, paste
- 1 cup honey
- 4 tablespoons canola oil
- salt and pepper, to taste

Score duck breast and season with salt and pepper. Set aside and keep cold.

Wash and peel beets and carrots. Place in boiling salted water and cook until *al dente*. Place in an ice bath to cool. Remove vegetables and set aside.

Take the day-old bread and place in bowl. In another bowl, add eggs, cream, nutmeg and ancho chile and whisk together. In a small sauté pan over medium heat, render 2 1/2 ounces of foie gras. (I like to break it up into small pieces.) Add to corn bread and toss; pour egg mixture over and toss quickly. With a slotted spoon, remove bread and place in 4-ounce buttered ramekins. Pour remaining liquid over bread. Heat oven to 375 degrees and place ramekins in a water bath. Cover loosely with foil and bake for 40 minutes.

In a small sauce pot, combine tamarind and honey with a pinch of salt over low heat. Remove from heat and keep in a warm place.

Heat sauté pan to medium high, take the duck breast and lay it skin-side down. This will allow the

fat to render off and the skin to caramelize. Sauté for 5 to 7 minutes, turn the duck breast over and sauté the other side about 3 minutes more. Turn it back over onto the skin side and decrease heat to medium low. Cover and cook for about 5 minutes and turn it over again. Start to brush the tamarind honey glaze over the duck skin. The duck is done when it reaches about 135 degrees. Remove from pan, let it rest for about 4 minutes and brush a little more tamarind honey glaze. Slice into 5 pieces.

Add 2 tablespoons of oil to a small pan and quickly sauté carrots and beets until hot. Sprinkle with a pinch of salt to taste.

Score foie gras, then heat a small pan to medium high; season and place foie gras in pan, scored side down. Sear for 30 seconds and turn over. Sear for another 30 seconds, remove and set aside.

Remove the corn-bread pudding from ramekins and place in the middle of the plate. Place the foie gras on top and fan the duck breast in front of the pudding. Arrange vegetables opposite of the duck. Enjoy!

## wine pairing

E. Gigal Gigondas

**One of the best complements to red meat and game, this wine – with, 70 percent Grenache, 20 percent Syrah and 10 percent Mourvedre – comes from the Rhone Valley in France where the soil consists of red clay and alluvial deposits. The result is an intense wine with an aromatic nose dominated by stone fruit, licorice and mushroom. The average age of the vines used is more than 40 years, with the vintner allowing the wine to mature over the next 10 years in the bottle. Open and decant up to one hour for optimal flavor.**

**Epicurean Wine Service**