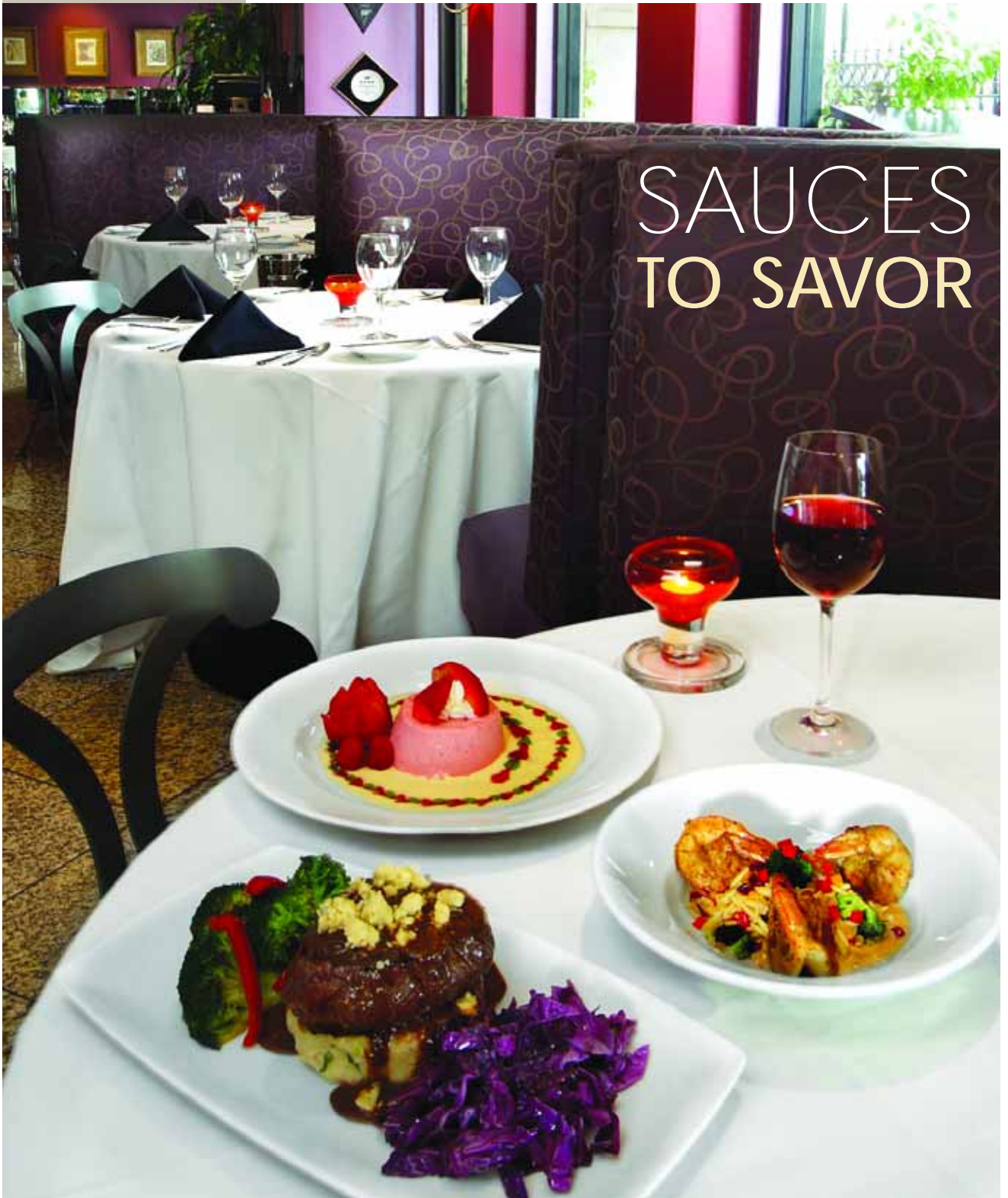


SAUCES TO SAVOR



EMBELLISH AMERICAN BEEF AND SEAFOOD WITH EUROPEAN-INSPIRED SAUCES FROM ROUGE

BY JIM SANDERS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIRO DVORSCAK

Rouge, a stylish two-story bistro located a bit east of the Montrose intersection at 812 Westheimer, is housed in a building that began life as The Plant House.



OPPOSITE PAGE: *At Rouge, jewel tones add drama to the downstairs dining room. Dishes, clockwise from top, are: Raspberry Panna Cotta, Shrimp with Brandy Sauce and Beef Fillet with Bleu Cheese and Green Peppercorn Sauce.*

ABOVE: *Rouge Manager Mo Varshochi, left, and Chef Octavio Madrigal*

“The owner was my Uncle Sia,” explains Mo Varshochi (pronounced “verr-so-chi”), Rouge’s manager and event coordinator. “Several years ago he enlarged the building, and he and my father opened the restaurant in 2003. The flower shop moved several blocks east on Montrose earlier this year.”

With its jewel-tone colors, mirrors and soft lighting, the street-level dining room at Rouge offers a sophisticated hideaway amid the hubbub of the surrounding neighborhood and has become a popular choice for couples married and un-

What may come as a surprise, however, are the special event spaces upstairs. The banquet room, elegantly dressed in paneled walls and chandeliers, adjoins a second area well suited for smaller gatherings.

Today, Rouge labels its menu “New American Cuisine,” something of a change from the original French-inspired format.

“We learned that small portions don’t go over with most Houstonians,” says Mo, “although we’ve still retained some French and Italian influences.”

Someone well versed in the restaurant’s evolving menu is Chef Octavio Madrigal, who has been with Rouge since its earliest days. He began as Rouge’s sous chef, tutored under several kitchen kings

and took over the reigns this year.

When asked about changes he has begun to instigate for broader appeal, Octavio points to the multiple steak choices. (This is Texas, after all.)

“There are now seven ways we’re serving USDA Prime from Harrison Ranch,” he says. “Then we age our beef 21 days and grill it at 850 degrees. All come with sides of vegetables and potatoes.”

But just because Rouge now tailors itself to Texas taste, don’t think for a moment that European flair is gone. Whether it’s a 28-ounce Porterhouse or 26-ounce “Cowboy” bone-in rib-eye, you have a choice Béarnaise, hollandaise or Cognac-peppercorn sauce.

Here, Madrigal shares Rouge’s recipes for some of the restaurant’s sauciest dishes.

All recipes are from Rouge, 812 Westheimer, 713.520.7955.



SHRIMP WITH BRANDY SAUCE

6 large shrimp, peeled and deveined	Juice of 1/2 lime
2 tablespoons olive oil	1/2 cup brandy
1/2 cup flour	1/2 cup cream
1/2 tablespoon chopped shallots	1/2 tablespoon chopped parsley
1/2 tablespoon minced garlic cloves	Salt and pepper to taste

Heat olive oil in a heavy skillet until hot. Dust the shrimp in flour and sauté lightly in the skillet, along with the shallots and garlic, for 1 or 2 minutes until the shrimp turn pink. Remove the shrimp to a warm plate.

Drain the oil from the skillet and add the brandy and lime juice. Lower heat to medium and cook for about 4 minutes, stirring occasionally, until sauce is reduced by half. Slowly add the cream, stirring constantly to incorporate it into the brandy and lime mixture.

Remove from heat, add the shrimp to the sauce. Garnish with chopped parsley. Serve over steamed rice and diced vegetables. Serves 2 or 3 people as an appetizer.



BEEF FILLET WITH BLEU CHEESE

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| 6 6-ounce fillets | 1 tablespoon green peppercorns |
| 1/2 cup olive oil | 15 leaves fresh sage |
| 1 cup beef stock | 1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves |
| 1/4 cup cream | 2 1/2 cups bleu cheese, crumbled |
| 2 tablespoons butter | |
| 1/2 cup brandy | |
| 1/2 cup chopped parsley | |

In a heavy skillet, heat the olive oil until hot. Place the fillets in the oil and sauté until medium rare. Place fillets on a warm platter.

Drain the oil from the skillet, add all the remaining ingredients except the bleu cheese and lower the heat to medium. Let simmer, stirring occasionally for about 4 to 5 minutes, to reduce the sauce by half.

Sprinkle the bleu cheese over the fillets, then pour the sauce over them. Serve with garlic mashed potatoes and sautéed vegetables. Serves 6.

RASPBERRY PANNA COTTA

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| 1 quart heavy cream or Half-N-Half | 3 packets Knox-brand gelatin dissolved in 1/2 cup water and poured through strainer |
| 2 vanilla beans or 3 tablespoons vanilla extract | |
| 1 cup sugar | |
| 1/4 cup raspberry juice made from fresh raspberries that have been crushed and strained to remove seeds | Garnish:
1 cup cream
2 tablespoons sugar
1 cup strawberries or raspberries for garnish |

Place quart of cream or Half-N-Half in a saucepan. Slice each vanilla bean lengthwise, scrape the tiny seeds from the bean and add to the cream in the saucepan.

Add sugar and raspberry juice that has been strained to eliminate seeds. Stir the ingredients and heat to the boiling point. Remove from heat and add the strained gelatin. Ladle into small cups (use 6 to 8 cups) and refrigerate.

To serve, sweeten 1 cup cream with 2 tablespoons sugar, stirring well to dissolve the sugar. Pool 2 tablespoons of sweetened cream onto each dessert plate. Run a sharp knife around the edge of the panna cotta in the cup, then turn the cup upside down onto the dessert plate. Garnish with fresh strawberries or raspberries. Serves 6 to 8.

