



Nicolas Legret, Antoine Westermann, Christophe Marque

Antoine Westermann


WILLARD
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Café du Parc

THE
WILLARD
ROOM

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On a mid-July morning, Antoine Westermann, the three star Michelin chef of Le Buerehiesel, came to visit Nicolas Legret chef of The Willard Room and Christophe Marque of Café du Parc.

It was a reunion of sorts, since Westermann had mentored both chefs, Legret here in Washington and Marque at his Paris bistro, Drouant. As the consultant for both The Willard Room and Café du Parc, Westermann led the three in preparing a nine course lunch featuring highlights they would decide on for the late summer menu.

The menu featured dishes that are signature Westermann. "My cooking style is to find the best product—the best chickens, vegetables, or pork—which is not as easy here as it is in France," he says. "It's also to use vegetables, think for health, flavor with herbs and not to use too much butter or fat."

Westermann, whose restaurants also include Mon Vieil Ami and Fortaleza C Guincho in Portugal, earned three Michelin stars at Le Buerehiesel, which he relinquished when he turned over the restaurant to his son, Eric.

Westermann enjoys consulting for The Willard Room and Café du Parc because it allows him to put his own spin French cuisine and to help define bistro fare in Washington. "In France, there have been three focuses on food: taste, quality of the product and sophistication. The third is now put aside among top chefs," he says. "And making this bistro different from others in Washington is a nice challenge."

Westermann aims for the cuisine at

both restaurants to accommodate American tastes, which he says have recently aligned with those of the French. "Now I know that Americans

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like eating like French people," he says. "When I started 30, 35 years ago, American cuisine was an exception." "Now, Americans not only like good eating but they like knowing about it."

Of working with Marque and Legret and other young chefs, Westermann

when they're on a plane, they have to be in love with cooking."

"This is a real pleasure. My pleasure is to see that I am astonished at what they can do. And often it's better than I could have done it when I was the chef in the middle of my team."



Herb-crusted veal loin, crispy "tête de veau", vegetables and natural jus



SAUTÉED ROUGET WITH RATATOUILLE

Serves 4

- 4 whole rouget cleaned de-boned and butterflied
- 10 tomatoes, diced
- 4 tomatoes, sliced
- 8 basil leaves
- 1 zucchini, diced
- 1 small red pepper, diced
- 1 green pepper, diced
- 1 medium sized eggplant, diced
- 1 white onion, diced
- 1 tbsp. minced garlic
- 5 sprigs thyme
- 2 sprigs rosemary, chopped
- Olive oil
- Kitchen string

FOR THE RATATOUILLE

Preheat oven to 300 degrees.

Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a large sauce pan over medium high heat. Cook onions till translucent. Add zucchini, red pepper, green pepper and eggplant and cook until soft. In a covered braiser, combine sautéed vegetables, diced tomatoes, garlic, thyme and rosemary. Stir to combine, cover and cook in the oven for one hour.

FOR THE ROUGET

Inside each fish layer two tomato slices, two basil leaves and then two more tomato slices. Close and tie together with kitchen string.

Heat a large sauté pan, lightly coated over medium high heat. Cook rouget 4 minutes and then turn before cooking an additional 4 minutes. Remove rouget from the pan and let rest 3 minutes.

Place rouget over ratatouille and serve with an herb salad composed of basil, tarragon, chervil, parsley and chives dressed in a balsamic vinaigrette.

ON THE SIDE

What was the reaction from family/friends when you told them you were going to become a chef?

It is an honor to become a chef in France so they were pleased.

Is there one flavor you would say opened you up to a new world?

When I was young- lemon verbena. It reminds me of home.

What is your spouse's and/or children's favorite dish?

My wife likes comfort food when we are home.

Where would you next like to travel for cooking influences?

New Zealand. I think I will spend time there in a few months. I want to see the country, the people. . . It's peaceful.

How has technology changed cooking; what, how?

People are more health conscious and are eating more vegetables.

What is it in the way great chefs think that they have in common?

They have to love other people and love giving other people pleasure. When you are a cook, you have to think, "What can I do to make something the best?"

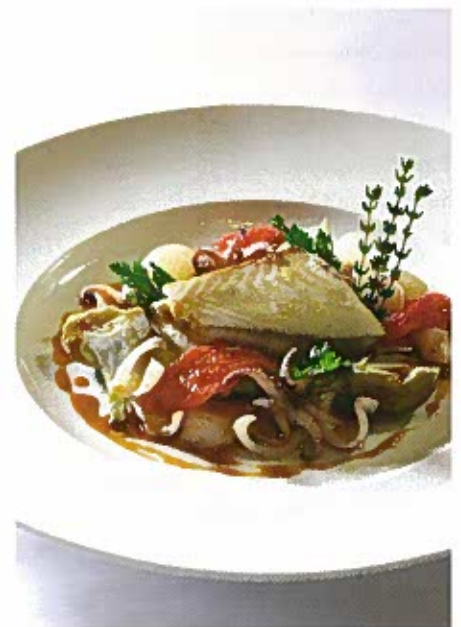


24-hour sous-vide pork belly with natural thyme and garlic jus

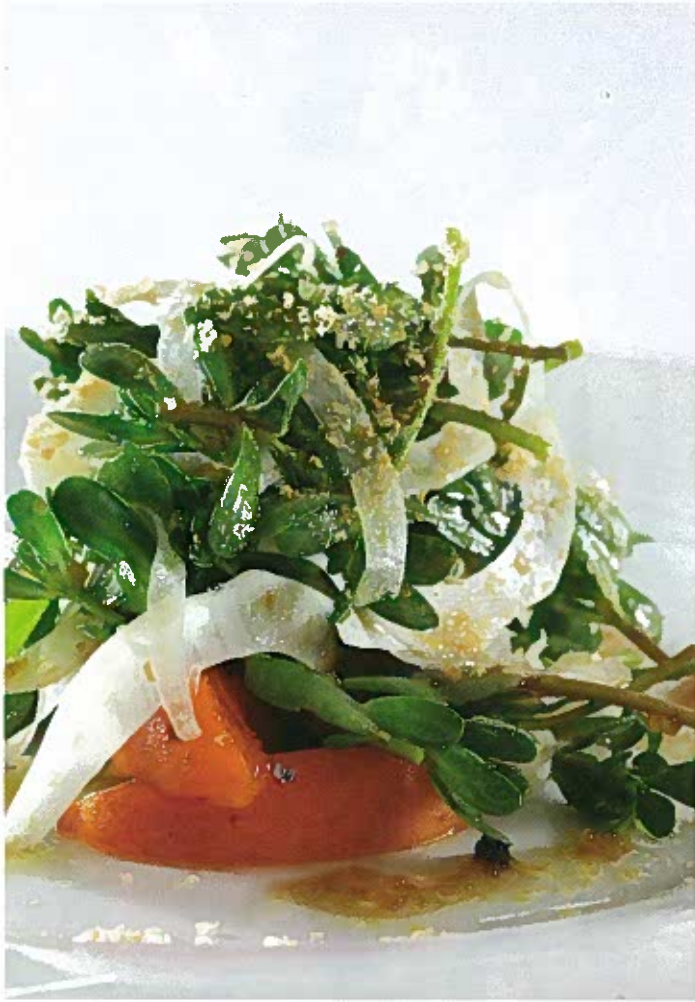
Giving up the helm at Le Buerehiesel has allowed Westermann to have these experiences through consulting. "My son and I worked together for seven years. He's 34 years old. Everyday, 'Yes, Papa.' Ten times, fifteen times. It's not possible for a father to have a son say yes all the time. So two years ago, I put my stars in his pocket and I stopped cooking there. I trust my son, so it was easier for me to say, Ciao."

"Today, I smile. But it took two and a half years. It's difficult to give up what you fight for," he says. "Now I am free like a bird."

As for his consulting role at The Willard Room and Café du Parc? He says, "A chef in France, Alan Chappelle wrote a book that translates to 'Cooking is more than recipes.' I like this headline. This is what I think. And I want to find out are the ways to make it better tomorrow."



Artichoke fricassee, confit tomatoes, fennel, fava beans, baby calamari and veal jus



CREEK FARM PURSLANE GLAZED APRICOTS

1/2 cup shaved thin
purslane
1/2 cup Banyuls vinegar
1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard
1/2 cup McEvoy Ranch olive oil

APRICOTS

Preheat oven to 200 degrees. Quarter and pit the apricots. Toss with 1/2 cup sugar and cinnamon and allow to sit for at least 30 minutes in a vacuum-sealed container, letting the fruit absorb the natural sugars. Warm in oven for 10 minutes at 200 degrees.

PLATING

Place 2 slices of apricot on each plate and sprinkle with 1/2 teaspoon of extra vinaigrette around the plate.

BANYULS VINAIGRETTE

1/2 cup shallots, minced
1/2 cup Banyuls vinegar
1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard
1/2 cup McEvoy Ranch olive oil

Combine the shallots and Banyuls vinegar. Simmer on medium heat until the vinegar is reduced by half. Remove from heat and transfer to a mixing bowl. Allow mixture to cool. Add Dijon mustard and mix to combine. Slowly drizzle in olive oil until the mixture is emulsified.