

Chakra and the Art of Culinary Zen

Enter Chakra and immerse yourself in an altered state of total sensory delight. Since its opening this past February, the fashionable restaurant has been creating an oasis where patrons can escape into a relaxed and embracing environment.



The gently trickling “waterwall” with changing, mood-enhancing lights...the soothing seduction of candles softly glowing from tables and niches in the walls... the enveloping booth tables with their plush velvet cushions and gauzy, iridescent canopy curtains...The courteous and unobtrusively efficient staff...The Ying Yang union of unexpected food pairings that somehow harmonize into a pleasing palate...Everything about the place is designed to let us savor the moment.

So put the cell phone on silent mode; forget about the worries of the day and meditate on the marvels of the menu. Chakra’s executive chef, Edward Lake, who spent five years absorbing global gastronomical fusion in the kitchens of the United Nations, has used his international food experience as the springboard to his own signature style. Calling it New American cuisine, he serves up an eclectic mix of basic, fresh ingredients given an interesting twist and execution. “I use the traditional foods of cultures like Italy and France to create something new; it’s approachable fine dining that’s simple yet elegant.” In his hands, something as ordinary as cucumber acquires an added dimension when served as a sorbet as part of Hamachi Tartare (\$16), a popular appetizer dish enhanced with Perigord truffle, avocado confit, micro shiso leaves and the aforementioned

cucumber sorbet. And my own personal favorite, the Grilled Baby Octopus (\$13)—complemented by oven-dried tomatoes, smoked red onions, bitter greens and citrus salad—is an imaginative interpretation of a classic dish. It's Zen years ahead of its more mundane culinary cousins, like the proverbial rubbery fried calamari, for instance.

“My food is a building of flavors,” Lake explains. Take the Blue Fin Tuna Three Ways appetizer (\$17). A house favorite, it is presented in a winning triad: cucumber wrapped maki roll, sashimi with wasabi oil, and tartare with preserved lemon. Lake uses light seasonings such as white soy sauce to let the true nature of the fish come through; your taste buds experience the unadulterated fresh ingredients in all their layered nuances.

You'll find your fill of examples of Lake's innovative approach to food in the extensive menu. In the “Inland” section, the melt-in-your-mouth Port Braised Short Rib (\$29) is surprisingly paired with foie gras, and both are accompanied by forked Yukon Gold potatoes, haricot verts and a port truffle jus. Absolutely mouth watering! There's also the Pan Seared Organic French Breast of Chicken (\$22), which comes with fresh corn, sage polenta, ruby carrots and a white corn emulsion; the Gremolata Crusted Rack of Lamb (\$34), presented with fire-roasted grapes, ratatouille and preserved orange jus; the Roasted Garlic Stuffed Prime Rib Chop (\$38), served with wilted spinach, fresh horseradish, caramelized onion and burgundy reduction; and the Rosemary Grilled Dry Aged New York Strip (\$26), which comes with haystack potatoes, arugula, soft herb salad and a roasted shallot sauce.

The “Coastal” menu offerings are equally appealing. Try the delectable Verbena Grilled Lobster (\$31), served with arugula risotto, salsify, wild mushrooms and a ricard tomato reduction; the Crispy Skin Sake Roasted Salmon (\$22), enhanced by puree of taro root, glazed baby bok choy and kafir lime mirin sauce; Grilled Diver Scallops (\$23), served with a Rioja wine glaze, shaved fennel and fresh citrus; the Ossobuco of Braised Monkfish (\$24), accompanied by appaloosa beans and baby artichokes; and Chakra's All Lump Crabmeat Crabcake (\$27), which comes with fresh sea urchin, poached asparagus and a scallion beurre blanc.

Also noteworthy are the Sashimi (\$14), a daily choice offering by the chef, and the selection of salads, which range from Tian of Tomatoes (\$6), chop-chop salad, manchego cheese and roasted pine nut dressing, to Roasted Pear Salad (\$9), with mizuna, tat soi, curly endive and green oak sprinkled with a 25-year-old balsamic vinaigrette. And let's not forget the palate pleasing pastas—House Made Pappardella (\$18), a delicious

concoction made with cultivated mushrooms, arugula and white truffle parmigiano broth; and Ravioli of Veal Cheeks & Wild Mushrooms (\$28), which is served with wilted spinach and a foie gras emulsion.

Chakra doesn't lag behind in libations, either. Currently, the restaurant, bar and lounge offers its patrons 125 different wines. Although they're primarily American, there are also wines from Italy, France, Chile and Australia. Brian Powell, who along with Fernando Delbono manages the restaurant, is excited to note that Chakra plans on doubling the wine offerings. "We're fast selling out of the wines," says Powell, who is in charge of the wine orders. "I recently got \$30,000 to add to our store."

Spirits are available either by the glass—a glass of Dom Perignon 1995 will run you \$40, for example—or by the bottle (prices on the eight-page wine list cover the spectrum). Mixed drinks, which average from \$9 to \$11, have enticing names like the Kama Sutra, Mystical Melon, Fruit of Life and Tranquil Moonlight, and they taste every sip as good as they sound!

Dessert lovers will achieve a state of bliss when biting into any of a variety of sweet somethings—Napoleon of Goat Cheese with fresh raspberries (\$12), Chocolate Marquis with cassis sauce and blood orange (\$12), Caramelized Golden Pineapple Tart with pineapple ice cream and pineapple anglaise (\$9), Mango Crème Brulee with cashew florentines (\$11) and Bittersweet Molten Cake served with pistachio anglaise and apricot conserve (\$12).

Simply Zen-sational!

Chakra

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- Chakra is open for dinner six days a week; Monday-Wednesday, 6-10 pm; Thursday-Saturday, 6-11 pm; bar opens daily at 5 pm; closed on Sunday. Lunch hours will be added starting in September.
- Reservations are strongly recommended, especially for Friday and Saturday evenings.
- Private parties are accommodated. For details ask to speak with Brian.
- All major credit cards accepted (No Discover).
- Gift certificates are available.
- Non-smoking dining area; cigarette smoking is permitted in the lounge area.
- Seating capacity: 140

- Executive chef: Edward Lake
- Sous chef: Elijah Stillittano
- General managers: Fernando Delbono and Brian Powell
- Staff size: 52Nayda Rondon is managing editor of BC The Magazine.

[Nayda Rondon](#) recently joined BC as its managing editor.