

Created by: Debra C. Argen

## Panache Restaurant at Auberge Saint-Antoine in Quebec, Canada

The definition of the word "panache" means elegance, or style, which perfectly describes the innovative "French Canadian cuisine with a twist" of **Executive Chef François Blais** of [Panache Restaurant at Auberge Saint-Antoine](#) in [Québec, Canada](#).

Panache Restaurant opened in 2004, and since then, Executive Chef François Blais and the restaurant have continued to win awards. With this in mind, we eagerly anticipated that dinner would be nothing short of spectacular. From the minute that we entered through the dramatic red velvet curtains leading into Panache Restaurant, and walked past the many artifacts that were found during a renovation, we were not disappointed. Edward and I had dinner at Panache Restaurant in May 2009, and were charmed by the ambience, and more than impressed by the service and the food.



**Panache Restaurant**

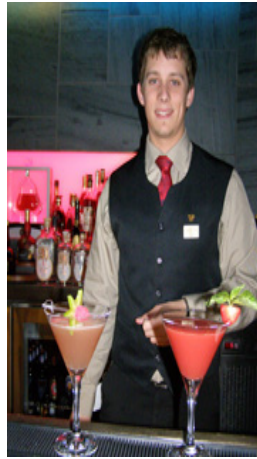
For starters, the restaurant is housed in one of the original buildings that make up the Auberge Saint-Antoine, in what was once the 19th century Hunt maritime warehouse, and features rough stonewalls, pine floors, and wood beamed ceiling with fairy lights, with plants in white ceramic pots and a bouquet of springtime pussywillows gracing the wide windowsills, and on the night that we dined, the glass and metal fireplace glowed invitingly.

The restaurant is stunning, filled with eye-catching objects d'art, golden rhododendron lamps illuminate the corners of the room, blown glass teardrops hang over the bar located at the front of the restaurant flanked by tall backed stools, an arched mirror features lighted grapes, and low music in the background creates a comfortable and sophisticated ambience.

We sat on a velvet corner banquette with red and sage decorative pillows at a table dressed with ivory linens and accessorized with a glass votive candle where we had a view of the water and the changing tableau that unfolded before us like a well-developed plotline of a story.

In addition to Panache Restaurant's excellent wine cellar, the restaurant also has a very diverse and innovative cocktail menu, and we indulged in pre-dinner cocktails of **Hamack**, made with Leblon Cachaça, sugar cane syrup, strawberry purée, fresh basil, fresh ginger, and fresh squeezed lime juice; and **Pomme Granade**, made with Sauza Tequila Blanc, Pama Liqueur, and freshly squeezed lime juice. The cocktails were well prepared and so delicious that we asked the barman, Thomas, if we could have the recipes, which he graciously provided.

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### **Hamack**

Yield: 1 cocktail

Glass used: Martini

#### Ingredients:

2.0

Ounces

Leblon Cachaça

0.5

Ounces

Sugar Cane Syrup

0.5

Ounce

Fresh Squeezed Lime Juice

2

Ounces

Strawberry Purée

4

Fresh Basil Leaves

3

Pieces

Fresh Ginger

Method: Chill Martini glass and set aside. In a mixing glass, add the basil, ginger, strawberry purée, and cane syrup, and muddle. Add the Leblon Cachaça and shake with ice. Strain into the chilled glass and garnish with a strawberry and basil leaves.

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**Pomme Grenade**

Yield: 1 cocktail

Glass used: Martini

Ingredients:

1.5

Ounces

Sauza Tequila Blanc

1.5

Ounces

Pama Liqueur

0.5

Ounce

Fresh Squeezed Lime Juice

Method: Chill Martini glass and set aside. Add ingredients to a shaker and shake well with ice. Strain into chilled glass and garnish with a carambola "star."



The à la carte menu at Panache Restaurant was a heady invitation to indulge and explore, however, it was the Signature Menu that won hands down, presenting us with an opportunity to take an enticing gastronomic and wine paring journey with Executive Chef François Blais. The journey began for Edward with an Amuse Bouche of beef tartar with truffle oil dressing presented on two thin baguette toasts with thinly sliced Parmesan. My journey began with a marinated sea scallop with tangerine emulsion that was beautifully presented in its shell on a bed of coarse salt on a small rectangular plate.



**Beef Tartar**

Palate tempted and ready, the next stop on the culinary journey for Edward was Tartines de Foie Gras de St-Apollinaire (Foie Gras "Tartines"), which was foie gras on a baguette under a decadent layer of champagne gelee. This presentation of foie gras really sung with smooth flavor and was well paired with a 2006 Sauternes Caprice de Bastor-Lamontagne, 13% alcohol, from France.

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### **Tartines de Foie Gras**

For me, there was a round cylinder of succulently sweet Lobster and Shrimp Remoulade with celeriac, mushrooms, and fresh herbs, that was topped with toast and baby greens, that had a lively spicy kick to it.



### **Lobster and Shrimp Remoulade**

Both of us had the next signature, Pétoncle Rôti, Hollandaise Classique, Morilles et Asperges (Pan Seared Scallop, Classic Hollandaise, Morels and Asparagus) paired with a 2007 Pinot Blanc, Barrique, Domaine Ostertag, from Alsace, France with slight oak, mineral, and slate notes. This was a stunning course of perfection, the scallop delicately golden on a bed of morels, with an artistic presentation of Hollandaise sauce intertwined with swirls of green on the large oval plate, accompanied by twig-thin green and white asparagus.



### **Pan Seared Scallop**

For the next courses, we went our separate ways, with Pressé de Ris de Veau de Ste-Angèle-de-Prémont et Queue de Boeuf, Toast au Piment et Jambon (Oxtail and Sweetbreads Compressed with Dried Ham and Pepper Toast) paired with a 2007 Pinot Noir, "Copain" Tous Ensemble, Anderson Valley, from the United States for Edward. The wine was aromatic with black fruit on the nose, with cassis and blackberries, as well as black pepper on the palate creating a spicy finish. Presented as rectangular portions on a rectangular white plate, it looked like very tasty modern art, with the sweetbreads composed on a thin slice of dried ham, complemented by a round pepper foam, with baby marinated beets in one corner, and a teardrop of jalapeno and bean purée on the opposite corner; the flavors and textures really excelled in this course.

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### Oxtail and Sweetbreads

I had Salmon, presented three ways, which was another well-executed course that was simply prepared, yet made the most of the fresh ingredients, and was well complemented by a Regaleali, Tasca d'Almerita, from Sicily with slate and citrus notes reflective of the Sicilian terroir. Presented as smoked salmon with three slits that were filled with a tiny amount of cream cheese, thinly sliced and baked Yukon Gold rectangular chips, and garnished with chives; gravalax draped over a flavorful quenelle of tiny diced yellow beet salad dressed with hazelnut oil that was positioned over a reduced beet sauce painted on the plate; and a generous mound of salmon tartar with a herb crown.



### Salmon



Edward continued with Faux Filet de Boeuf Angus Grilée, Feuilleté aux Moreilles et Foie Gras (Grilled Rib Eye of Angus Beef, Morels and Foie Gras Feuilleté) paired with a 2004 Côte de Brulhois, "Le Vin Noir," 13% alcohol, from Dunes, France, which was full-bodied and had a deep rich dark color, with dark fruit on the nose and dark fruit, prunes, and tobacco on the palate. Although all of the courses were excellent, if Edward could have only had one course, this probably would have had to be the one. Presented as four slices of medium-rare tender beef in a pool of sauce, morels and foie gras presented in puff pastry, with a brush of artichoke purée on the plate, and accompanied with carrots and salsify served in a small black pot; this was definitely a highlight of the evening.



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### Grilled Rib Eye of Angus Beef

I had Halibut, that was a perfect savory ending to my journey, buttery rich and delicately golden with a crown of sage and pinenuts, and presented in a deep round bowl on a bed of spinach coulis with tomato coulis buttons adding contrast and flavor, that paired nicely with a 2005 Reserve Chardonnay, Henry of Pelham Family Estate, 13% alcohol, Niagara Peninsula, St. Catherines, Ontario, Canada.



### Halibut

The Québec region has over 280 cheeses, so it was no surprise that for the cheese course we had a delicious cheese from the province, Tomme des Joyeux Fromagers de St-Ludger, Compote d'Abricot et Fenouil (Tomme des Joyeux Cheeses with Apricot Compote and Confit Fennel), which is a hard farmhouse cheese made from raw goat milk with a washed rind. Paired with the compote and fennel straws, it presented us with an excellent opportunity to experience a taste of the cheese region.



### Cheese Course

Next came a pre-dessert of tiny cones filled with lime sorbet and presented in shot glasses with sugar in the bottom; and for the grand finale of our culinary odyssey, there was Fraises du Québec for dessert (Québec Strawberries) paired with a 2007 Mauzac, Cepage Mauzac Roux, 12% alcohol from France. The dessert was the perfect combination of artistic presentation, layers of flavors and textures, and a light finish that consisted of coconut mousse, with cinnamon apples, strawberries, and rhubarb topped with a thin pepper toast. As a final sweet parting gift, there was a plate of nougat and caramel candies. It had indeed been a memorable gastronomic evening getting to know Chef François Blais' culinary vision of "French Canadian cuisine with a twist."

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### Strawberry Dessert

Read about **Panache Restaurant** and the **Auberge Saint-Antoine** in the **Hotels and Resorts** and **Chefs' Recipes** section where Executive Chef François Blais provides his delicious taste of the restaurant in **English** and in **French**.



**Chef Fran  
çois Blais**

**Panache Restaurant** is open for lunch Monday - Friday from 12:00 pm until 2:00 pm; and for dinner daily from 6:00 pm until 10:00 pm, with the exception of holidays.



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