

Created by: Debra C. Argen

Cintemani Restaurant at The Ritz-Carlton Istanbul

Çintemani Restaurant at [The Ritz-Carlton Istanbul](#) offers guests striking views of Istanbul and stylish comfort in their elegant dining room.

The dining room at Çintemani Restaurant features a wall of windows, Murano crystal chandeliers, multi-colored silk pillows line a lemon banquette that runs the length of the room, the chairs are upholstered in the same lemon fabric, Turkish paintings grace the walls, the tables are draped with white on white crisp linens, and accessorized with white freesias in white vases, cobalt glasses, cobalt bread plates and cobalt oil lamps illuminate the room. Strains of classical violin music drift into the restaurant to create a romantic ambience.

From our table by the window, we were enchanted with the spectacular view of Istanbul and the Dolmabahçe Mosque. Although it was 3 days after the full moon, the moon was still large and bright over the Bosphorus, which divides Istanbul into 2 continents, Europe and Asia, and the lights of the residences on the Asian continent sparkled like diamonds on the sea.

We began our evening with a glass of champagne from Vincente de Castellane, Brut, France as we perused our creative menus, and nibbled on a selection of miniature rolls served in a silver crescent moon and accompanied with a bowl of mixed spices of cumin, garlic, salt and other spices and olive oil to dip our rolls in. When internationally renowned chef Fabrice Canelle joined The Ritz-Carlton Istanbul as the Executive Chef on January 2, 2006, he decided to have some fun and create two menus, one for the men and one for the women. His reasoning behind his Gentleman's Menu and his Lady's Menu is that men and women eat differently, and that the menus would also provide great dinner conversation, giving new meaning to the "I'll show you mine, if you'll show me yours."

When Edward F. Nesta and I had dinner at Çintemani Restaurant in March 2006, I noticed that in addition to the very different menu selections, the menus had nice visual clues as well, with a carrot indicating a Vegetarian selection and a Turkish flag indicating traditional Turkish cuisine. Looking at my Lady's Menu, I found more carrots on my menu than on the Gentleman's Menu, which featured more Turkish selections.

In keeping with his Lady's and Gentleman's Menus, Chef Fabrice sent us different amuse bouches, shrimp in a spicy sauce on a skewer in a shot glass for Edward, and zucchini, red pepper and eggplant on a skewer in a shot glass for me.



Edward continued with Raki Cured Salmon "Gravlax" with Aquavit Cucumber, Corn Dill Pancake and Mustard Dill Sauce that was enticingly presented as rolled gravlax on a bed of cucumber and accompanied with a shot glass of melon juice. I selected the Grilled Shrimps on "Tartine" Pumpkin Confit, Ginger and Green Apple Reduction, which were three large prawns presented on sliced pumpkin with ginger on toast accompanied with a shot glass of julienned green apple.

Although Çintemani Restaurant has a large selection of international wines by the bottle as well as by the glass, we enjoy experiencing regional wines when we are visiting a country, and with this in mind, Edward selected a 2002 Doluca Kav, Bo azkere-Öküzgözü, Southeast Anatolia, Turkey, that proved to be a full-bodied wine made with Bo azkere and Öküzgözü grapes, to pair with a Beef Red Curry with Coconut Cream, Cardamom Basmati Rice and Lemon Grass.

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I selected the Pistachio and Green Vegetable Risotto with Mizuna Leaves presented in a deep bowl which was a creamy balance of flavor with a feathery layer of mizuna leaves, that I paired with a 2004 Sarafin, Sauvignon Blanc, Galloli Peninsula, Turkey, which was a young, aromatic, crisp white wine with floral and fruity notes.

Since we were very naughty and had eaten dessert at The Ritz-Carlton Club ® before going to dinner at Çintemani Restaurant, we sensibly decided to resist having another dessert.



We returned to the restaurant several nights later, and we were surprised to see the Hostess wearing a cowboy hat and jeans, and that the tables were draped with red and white checked tablecloths. Our waiter, Uzeyir, assured us that we were indeed in the same restaurant, but that it was Steak Night. Once again, Chef Fabrice was trying something different, and from the numbers of diners in the restaurant, it appeared to be quite a popular concept.

This time Chef Fabrice sent Edward an amuse bouche of shrimp in tomato sauce in a shot glass and marinated vegetables on a skewer with pesto sauce for me, to accompany our glass of champagne from Vincente de Castellane, Brut, France.



Edward continued with a starter of Nigiri and California Rolls with Soy Sauce, Ginger, and Wasabi, which had 2 pieces of tuna, 2 shrimp, 2 salmon and 2 California rolls enticingly presented on a black lacquer tray. I savored the Crispy Shitake Mushrooms and Mixed Vegetable Shrimp Rolls with Sweet Chili Sauce, which were 3 delicately crispy spring rolls on a bed of crispy cellophane noodles, accompanied with shrimp chips, a small bowl of cilantro leaves and a bowl of sweet and sour sauce presented in a square box set on a rattan mat.



For his main course, Edward selected the Mijote of Beef Cheeks in Burgundy Wine and Marjoram served in

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"Le Creuset" with Buttered Horseradish Whipped Potatoes, a delectable combination that was served tableside. I selected the Pan-fried Turbot Fillet with Semolina Disk and Turkish Style Vierge Sauce. Please read **Chefs' Recipes** where Chef Fabrice graciously shares his recipes for the Mijote of Beef Cheeks in Burgundy Wine and Marjoram and the Pan-fried Turbot Fillet with Semolina Disk and Turkish Style Vierge Sauce.

Turkey is famous for its coffee, so for our dessert, we selected the Tiramisu with Coffee Jelly and Coffee Ice Cream presented in a brandy snifter, garnished with a ribbon of bitter chocolate and a white chocolate triangle, and was accompanied with 2 thin almond crescent shaped biscotti and topped with 2 round cookies.

Chef Fabrice sent us a chocolate 'sandwich' of dark chocolate ganache between layers of 2 thin squares of chocolate presented on a fork for Edward, and a rose macaroon presented on a red rose petal on a spoon for me, which was an absolutely delightful way to end our last evening at the restaurant, as I love the use of rose in food.

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