

Created by: Debra C. Argen

## first floor



Chef Buchholz's light and aromatic cuisine receives star treatment with elegant white-gloved service at [first floor](#) (one-star Michelin, 18 points GaultMillau and five cutlery) restaurant in Berlin.

We began our evening in the Lobby Lounge of the Hotel Palace Berlin listening to the pianist play "Perhaps, Perhaps, Perhaps" and "I've Got You Under my Skin" while enjoying an aperitif of champagne, before proceeding upstairs to the restaurant "first floor," where Maître d'hôtel Jerk Riese was waiting to greet us.



The restaurant décor is elegant with rosewood paneling glowing from the recessed fairy lights and the sconces on the walls, tables draped with café au lait linens with a fleur de lis pattern, matching linen napkins, and accessorized with white tapers burning in silver candlesticks, and artistic arrangements of orange and red reverse roses, orange birds of paradise, green stalks, and Spanish moss in tall turquoise art glass vases beckoned invitingly. Prussian blue crushed velvet banquettes and chairs add contrast to the attractive dining room built on a corner of the hotel, where two walls of windows provide guests with views of Berlin, and dramatic cranberry art glass of varying heights on the wide windowsills add visual interest.

In the year since our [lunch](#) at the restaurant, Maître d'hôtel Jerk Riese has been busy expanding his international water menu with over 30 waters from 13 countries. What I especially enjoyed about his new water menu is that he has included a description of each of the waters as well as an image of the bottle. Having attended many water tastings, I can honestly write that all waters are not created equally. Some waters have intense mineral notes, some provide calcium and magnesium, others have an oily feel, and still others impart a level of saltiness on the palate, so depending on your food and wine pairing, you want to choose a water that will complement your selections.



Gunnar Tietz, Sommelier of the Year 2006, began our gastronomic evening with a glass of 1998 Taittinger Comtes de Champagne Blanc de Blanc made with 100% chardonnay, with green tea and mineral notes on the nose and the palate with lively bubbles, and a deliciously crisp finish. Paired with the Amuse Bouche of an oyster on the half shell, a delectable tempura oyster with lime mayonnaise, and a tiny wedge of multi-layered pumpernickel bread and cheese, and Maître Jerk Riese's selection of Voss water from Norway, it was the perfect beginning.

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For our first course, we had Carpaccio of oxtail topped with mesclun and a line of pesto on the teardrop shaped plate, with cape gooseberry preserves, and a deep-fried, crisp, brique wrapped prawn rolled in a parsley leaf, paired with a Nussberg Alte Reben Wiener Wein, Austria in an imperial bottle (6-liters) with an aromatic floral and honeysuckle nose and mineral notes on the palate.



Sommelier Gunnar Tietz has 1,000 wines in the wine cellar of the restaurant and is always looking to create a special evening for wine connoisseurs. On March 4, 2007, Sommeliers Gunnar Tietz and Henrik Thoma of the Louis C. Jacob hotel in Hamburg held the first Big Bottle Party (Imperial, 6-liter bottles) in Germany on March 4, 2007 at "first floor" (the next one will be in March 2008), and although we were saddened that we had just missed this extraordinary event, Sommelier Tietz remedied the situation when he produced a Big Bottle of the Nussberg Alte Reben Wiener Wein for us to enjoy.



Chef Buchholz next sent us Seared tuna and scallop with asparagus, presented as a quenelle of apple chutney, two thin asparagus spears, a seared cube of tuna, seared scallop with a crispy exterior and succulent interior, and candied cherry tomatoes that tasted as if they were poached in cherry juice, with a line of reduced soy sauce sprinkled with chopped peanuts. This was a gorgeous course with an interesting variety of flavors and texture.



We continued with a colorful presentation of Skewered scampi and Asian vegetables, presented in a deep bowl with carrots, snow peas, mushrooms, mung bean sprouts, and a rich and heavenly sauce with just the right level of spiciness and cilantro, that was perfection in a bowl.

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For our next course there was a delightful sweet and sour Consommé of Red Pepper with Smoked Codfish Ravioli with baby bok choy, and fresh peas. This course was presented as tender smoked codfish ravioli in a deep bowl that was enhanced when Stellv. Maître Marko Grundmann poured the complementary tasty and spicy consommé of red pepper over the ravioli. Chef Buchholz has a magic wand when it comes making ravioli, which are tender morsels filled with pure pleasure. For this course, Sommelier Tietz paired a 2004 Schneider Einzel Stuck, Germany, with a deep red color, and an aromatic nose that I wanted to swim in its bouquet of black cherries, plums, and hints of tobacco, with medium tannins, pepper, and spice on the palate, with a powerful finish and mouthful of flavor.



Edward and I parted ways for the next course, Lamb in a lovely pool of sauce with a generous ravioli, and goat cheese inside a sugar syrup candy for Edward, and Filet de Loup de Mer with foam sauce and an aubergine caviar beggar's purse for me.

The lamb presentation was both interesting and delicious with its contrasting flavors of meat, rich sauce, tender ravioli, and sweetness from the goat cheese filled "candy;" and I really enjoyed the filet de loup de mer presented on a square of roasted red pepper on a bed of couscous, with sun-dried tomato and parsley garnish, and a flavorful beggar's purse, with an accompanying swirl of sauce on the plate. What I love about Chef Buchholz's cuisine is his constant surprises of little tastes to tease and tempt the palate.



To prepare us for the dessert course, Chef Buchholz sent us a little tease, a "Greeting" in the form of a tiny wedge of warm apple strudel with raisins and nuts with vanilla ice cream. Dessert followed with a medley of coconut, a delicate coconut mousse in a crunchy Florentine swirl, and a quenelle of coconut ice cream on a coconut marshmallow bed, with sweet, diced pineapple with a spaghetti thin chocolate straw as a garnish, paired with a lovely dessert wine, a 2001 Chateau Jolys, Jurancon, from the South of France made with 95% Gros Manseng and 5% Petit Manseng, with melon and mango on the nose, and not overly sweet on the palate.

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Just as we thought that it could not get any better, the dessert trolley arrived laden with a bevy of sweet beauties that we had to sample, for how could we resist pralines with ginger, Florentines, chocolates, caramels, and so many more treats, that "visions of sugar plums danced in our heads" like children at Christmastime?

Chef Buchholz's creativity and passionate dedication enabled "first floor" to receive their Michelin-star rating in 1997, which he has continued to maintain; not easy to achieve a star rating, it is even more difficult to maintain.

"first floor" is open for Lunch (12:00 pm - 2:30 pm) and Dinner (6:00 pm - 10:30 pm). The restaurant is closed on Sunday and Monday.

Read about **first floor** in the [Restaurants](#) section (**first floor (lunch)**) and in **Chefs' Recipes** where Chef Buchholz shares a few recipes in **English** and **German**.

Read about **Hotel Palace Berlin** in the **Hotels and Resorts** and **Spas** sections.

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