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## Jean-Georges Hits The Mark



The Mark  
Photo: Julie Glassberg

On the first day of “friends and family” at Jean-Georges Vongerichten’s newest juggernaut, The Mark, in the hotel of the same name, there were plenty of expected industry types in attendance like Lana Trevisan, who oversees the Standard Grill, and Lure Fishbar owner John McDonald. But there were also boldface names like Samantha Boardman, Patrick DeMarchelier, Isabel Rattazzi and Chuck Scarborough – not the types you want to iron out too many kinks with. “Mick Jagger just walked in with a friend who was invited,” noted Vongerichten regarding the second night’s crowd. “He showed up and we had no idea he was coming.”

No expense was spared in the dining area, where kind peach light filters through Mondrian glass and bounces off copper paneling in the main room, and a soaring skylight gives an expansive feel to the back. “The chairs were \$1,200,” whispered an interior designer, “I’ve never known anyone to spend more than \$600.” Meanwhile, the lounge area has been given

a fanciful look with pony-painted fabric on the seats, a curved bar (making it easy for people to face each other) and silver light fixtures that had guests free-associating everything from “shooting stars!” to “disco balls!” to “colanders!” Several guests described the overall vibe as “the new Le Cirque.”

Dressed in whites – and just back from Vancouver after some Olympics spectating – Vongerichten warmly greeted the parade of fortunate guinea pigs. His menu is filled with comfort food for gourmets – fresh fettuccine with Meyer lemon, Parmesan and pepper; pizza with beef carpaccio and arugula; caviar with warm blini; lobster with mushroom vinaigrette and Savoy cabbage; and a cheeseburger with black truffle dressing and Brie.

“When you open in a hotel on the Upper East Side, you have to have food for the neighborhood as well as travelers,” observed Vongerichten. “This is like the Mercer Kitchen, Uptown. It’s different from having one identity – you have to please both kinds of palates, international and local. It’s better not to have a label like French or Italian because you have to fulfill every kind of craving at every hour – pasta, burgers, caviar.” There’s also a “Simply Prepared” section of the menu with dishes like whole roasted chicken for two. “We use only the best ingredients,” maintains the über-chef. “So the grilled salmon will be wild, from Alaska, dressed with just a little balsamic and served with fries.”

Monday was the last scheduled night of trial run tastings. “Each night is getting better and better,” Jean-Georges told us. “But I will decide tonight at 10 o’clock whether we are ready to open tomorrow.”

Things must have gone well, as the restaurant opened to the public for lunch and dinner today.

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– Beth Landmanv



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