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Chef Kostow's  
Kitchen at Meadowood

The Redesign of  
Auberge du Soleil

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**THE CELEBRATED CHEF AT  
MEADOWOOD IS THE MASTER  
OF HIS OWN HOUSE**

**BY LAURA RAFATY**

# In Kostow's Kitchen



**ABOVE** Ceramic plates created exclusively for The Restaurant at Meadowood by artist Lynn Mahon serve as the perfect complement to the inventive cuisine.

**OPPOSITE** Chef Christopher Kostow using tweezers to put the finishing touches on one of his inventive dishes.

A cool steel Chef's Counter table occupies a central location in the gleaming white kitchen of The Restaurant at Meadowood, where the intelligently innovative cuisine of Chef Christopher Kostow delights guests who enjoy dining as a spectator sport. Sparse and opulent at the same time, this space of white subway tile, stainless steel, and glass pulsates with light and energy, further illuminated by the glow of three Michelin stars. Friendly but busy staffers bustle in and out, the servers attending to guests in the dining room, while the Chef and his team concoct a 15 to 20-course tasting menu for four pampered Chef's Counter patrons (\$500 per person, plus \$350 for wine pairings).

If the spanking clean and startlingly clutter-free kitchen could be mistaken for a laboratory, Chef Kostow is clearly the mad scientist-in-residence. With his white chef's coat, edgy eyeglasses and spiky black hair,





TOP Avocado Marble  
& Coal-roasted Carrot  
in Carrot Water

MIDDLE Crescenza Angolotti  
& Crispy Broccoli

LOWER Date, Caraway  
& Hearts of Palm

OPPOSITE Charred Bavette,  
Garden Onions & Truffle





he shifts between youthful exuberance and the masterly concentration that preparation of his meticulous dishes requires. The 3,000 square-foot kitchen – recently renovated to Kostow’s specifications -- aims to create an expansive work environment with unimpeded sightlines. “A very bright kitchen is a necessity,” believes Kostow. “When I walk in to the kitchen and the door closes behind me, it feels like the world we created makes us a better restaurant and me a better chef and person.”

The food is not of the laboratory but of nature; flavorful, sensual, and warmly evocative of the farm and garden. “Our cooking is not molecular,” says the chef. “We do dishes that are innovative but do them with fresh


food and ingredients, not chemicals and techniques. We don’t want guests to feel like guinea pigs.” His modestly-sized masterpieces include pungent fromage blanc–filled pastry pillows, crisp geoduck clam fritters, gamey goat meat with sunflower seed risotto, seasonal summer squash cannoli with mojama, coal-roasted sturgeon with chive blossom vinaigrette, and veal, potato and sorrel in veal soup topped with trout caviar. Dessert might be plump blueberries in buttermilk with dark chocolate, beets and violets, or a box of forest-motif mignardises. Kostow continues to “experiment in new directions”; his current dish-in-development is marinated sea urchin in a puddle of old sherry, chestnut and truffle.





His boldest experiment may be abandonment of a set menu, preferring to “carefully curate” the dining experiences of some 70 guests each evening. Advance planning permits accommodation of allergies and preferences without compromising quality. “It gives us the time to put together a menu deserving of the restaurant so everyone feels they experienced the best of us,” he explains. The Chef’s Counter menu sells out so frequently, it is now offered in the dining room, along with the regular ten-course tasting menu (\$225; \$450 with wine pairings).

Back in the kitchen, Kostow chats with Chef’s Counter guests as their food is prepared, serving most dishes personally. He observes that “some guests just want to eat dinner, some want to talk about the development of the food, but some want to get up and walk around.” What could be chaos is carefully controlled, and so far, no Counter guest has gotten too close—or sloshed—for comfort.

During Meadowood’s annual “The 12 days of Christmas” celebration, Kostow will welcome 12 world-class chefs—like Mori Onodera and David Toutain—collaborating to create once-in-a-lifetime meals (from \$1240 for 2, per night, in the dining room, \$5800 at the Chef’s Counter, lodging included). Chef Kostow may share his Meadowood kitchen with visiting colleagues, but this white-hot culinary star will undoubtedly remain in cool control. 

The Restaurant at Meadowood Napa Valley  
 St. Helena California; 707.967.1205  
[www.therestaurantatmeadowood.com](http://www.therestaurantatmeadowood.com)



OPPOSITE Executive  
 Sous Chef Kim Floresca

TOP Chef Kostow  
 addressing his team  
 in the state-of-the-art  
 kitchen created to his  
 specifications

BOTTOM Pine-cured  
 Venison, Tuna &  
 Assorted Sorrels