

EVENTS

Meadowood holiday dinners showcase top chefs, vintners

By Tara Duggan

For most, the Twelve Days of Christmas conjures up a catchy traditional holiday song. But for Christopher Kostow and his staff at the Restaurant at Meadowood, it means 12 nights of multi-course meals, each coordinated with a different top-rated chef from Paris to San Francisco.

"The lineup we have is pretty remarkable. It's so timely, and they're such in-the-moment guys," Kostow says.

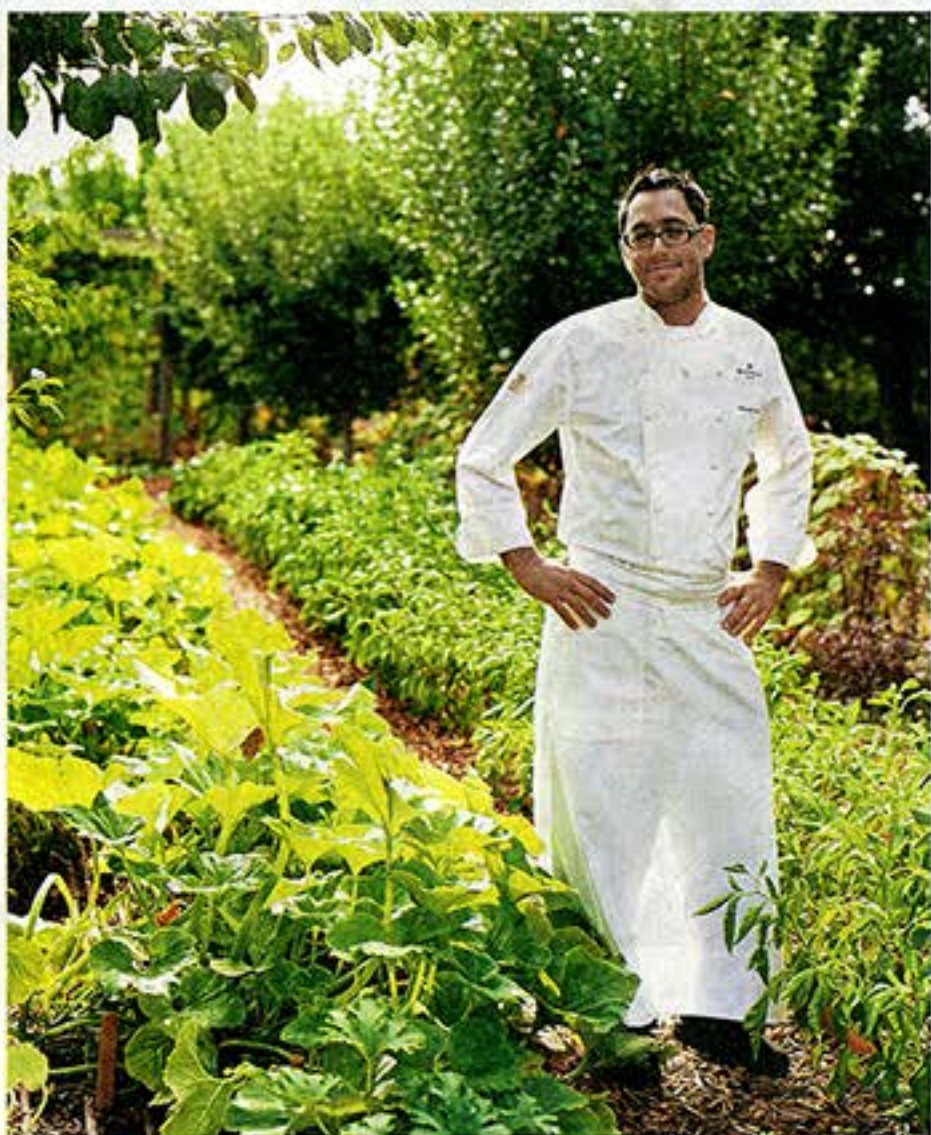
Kostow and the rest of the resort staff are making plans for the fifth annual series of dinners, which will take place Dec. 7-22. Guest chefs include David Toutain of Agapé Substance in Paris; Jason Franey of Canlis Restaurant in Seattle, who Kostow knows from their days together at Campton Place under Daniel Humm; and James Syhabout of Commis and Hawker Fare in Oakland.

Each chef is paired with a Napa Valley vintner, such as John Conover of Plumpjack Estate and Ann and Dick Grace of Grace Family Vineyards, who will select matching wines for the courses.

Tickets start at \$1,240 per couple, which includes an overnight stay at the St. Helena resort. Twenty percent of proceeds will go to Share Our Strength, a nonprofit focused on ending childhood hunger in the United States. Plus, the resort will donate an additional \$2,000 per guest chef to the charity. The visiting chefs will also take part in a lecture series at the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone in St. Helena.

In the past, the restaurant, which has earned four stars from *The Chronicle* and three stars from the Michelin Guide, has played host to guest chefs who have created their own menus. This year, the dinners will be designed by Kostow and the visiting chefs.

"I like to be a little more involved," says Kostow. This year, "we get to cook, and we are also nodding to the style of the respective chefs, which leads to an intense



Meadowood 2009

For this year's Twelve Days of Christmas at the Restaurant at Meadowood, chef Christopher Kostow will help design the menus of the multicourse dinners.

12 Days of Christmas

The Twelve Days of Christmas dinners are Dec. 7-22 at Meadowood Napa Valley, 900 Meadowood Lane, St. Helena; (707) 963-3646; meadowood.com. Guests are invited into the kitchen for small bites and sparkling wine at 6 p.m.; dinners begin at 7 p.m.

Tickets are \$1,240 weekdays and \$1,315 on Friday and Saturday, per couple, including an overnight stay at the hotel but not including tax or tip. A few dinners are already sold out.

amount of collaboration."

In preparation, Kostow is traveling to each of the restaurants he hasn't already been to, such as to Chicago, to visit the restaurants of Phillip Foss (EL Ideas) and Matthias Merges (Yusho), and Nashville, where he'll eat at Josh Habiger and Erik Anderson's Catbird Seat.

Stuart Brioza and Nicole Krasinski of State Bird Provisions of San Francisco will collaborate with Kostow on the Dec. 12 dinner. Brioza and Kostow will alternate between seven savory courses, ending with Krasinski's dessert. Brioza plans to do one course with quail, his restaurant's specialty, and a bone marrow dish.

"He's going to do Meadowood style, and I'm going to have to do a version of State Bird style," says Brioza with a laugh, referring to his more casual, dim sum-style restaurant. "It will be fun to think outside the box."

The collaboration process will be a great experience for everyone at his restaurant, Kostow says.

"It's such a positive thing for our staff to come in every year and see 11 different ways of doing things," he says, adding that the techniques and dishes that

the kitchen gets to see during the dinners are referred to frequently throughout the year.

For the 12th dinner, which takes place Dec. 22 and is prepared entirely by Kostow and his staff, the menu is always paired with Bond Estates winery and tends to be influenced by the previous guest chefs, Kostow says. Last year, it included grilled duck hearts with chrysanthemum and lingonberries, and whipped foie gras with dried and salted plum and sorrel.

"It's really cool to have the opportunity to open our doors to people. It's rare for restaurants to do that to any degree, but for 12 days it's unparalleled," says Kostow.

"It should be a pretty exceptional collection of cooking."

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