

FOOD ARTS



AT THE RESTAURANT AND HOTEL FOREFRONT ■ JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2013

Ducasse's Big Bash

**Plus: Insiders Pick
Kitchen Gear**



Fresh Airs

A change of tableware can imbue presentations with energy and vigor and enhance a restaurant's bright and healthy appearance. Kelley McClain takes a look at Rouge Tomate. Photos by Christopher Villano. ▶



New York City's **Rouge Tomate** (the younger cousin to the Brussels original) was only open one year, under the stewardship of director of operations **Peter Esmond** and executive chef **Jeremy Bearman**, when it was awarded its coveted Michelin star in 2009. Its modern design by Bentel&Bentel forms a custom-designed shadow box for Bearman's modern American menu, which is fully vetted by New York City-based SPE Certified and espouses a holistic and sustainable approach to health and gastronomic pleasure. (The name SPE Certified derives from the Latin "*sanitas per escam*" or "health through food"; the company itself was established by Rouge Tomate founder & CEO **Emmanuel Verstraeten** and launched in the United States in 2012.)

But a restaurant is not a static entity and must continually evolve to survive. When he decided to refresh the tableware, Esmond was seeking refinement and versatility, as well as a pure white china. Just as Bearman gleans his ingredients from the best the market has to offer, Esmond drew from various sources to achieve a clean, pure look at the table. (The old tableware is recycled for use at family dinner.)

Elegantly sleek silverware from Robert Welch (www.robertwelch.com), bread and butter plates by Villeroy & Boch (www.villeroy-boch.com),



villeroy-boch.com), Spiegelau (www.spiegelauusa.com) stems, and Schott Zweisel (www.fortessa.com) water goblets make the table ready to receive guests. In keeping with Rouge Tomate tenets of sustainability, wooden trays fashioned from materials reclaimed from an upstate New York farm carry sliced country sourdough and seeded rolls. At dinner, small Steelite (www.steelite.com) bowls carrying three spreads—house-made ricotta, spinach/pine nut puree, and Provençal oil seasoned with fresh herbs—arrive on a bamboo tray from Bambu (www.bambuhome.com).

Presented on Raynaud Limoge's (www.devinecorp.net) "Lunes" plate, designed by Food Arts' Silver Spoon honoree Anne-Sophie Pic, Hawaiian walu crudo is elegantly garnished with avocado, red radish, daikon, cucumber, jalepeño, red onion, yuzu, lemongrass oil, and shiso, then finished with a sprinkle of sea salt and piment d'Espelette. A Pomegranate Fizz (pressed pomegranate juice, mint syrup, lime juice, vodka, club soda) looks refreshing in a Spiegelau highball.

A Slateplate (www.slateplate.com) tray holds a terrine of guinea hen, black truffle, and foie gras, accessorized with pickled red pearl onions, Lambrusco vinegar gelée, macerated dried figs, grainy mustard, and micro greens. Natural textures are underscored by a Chilewich (www.chilewich.com) mat. Ion Strong (www.korin.com) stemware makes a powerful statement.

The layering of plates and bowls from Rosenthal USA's (www.hotel.Rosenthal.de) "Loft" collection echoes the strata of flavors found in cow's milk ricotta gnudi nestled in a black truffle emulsion with cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, black trumpet and oyster mushrooms, and Parmesan.

Throughout the space, cosmetic splashes of red—from hand-blown glass votives to trays of cranberries in a reflecting pool, from the napkins to the wall panels—tie it all together.

Look for recipes at FoodArts.com.

