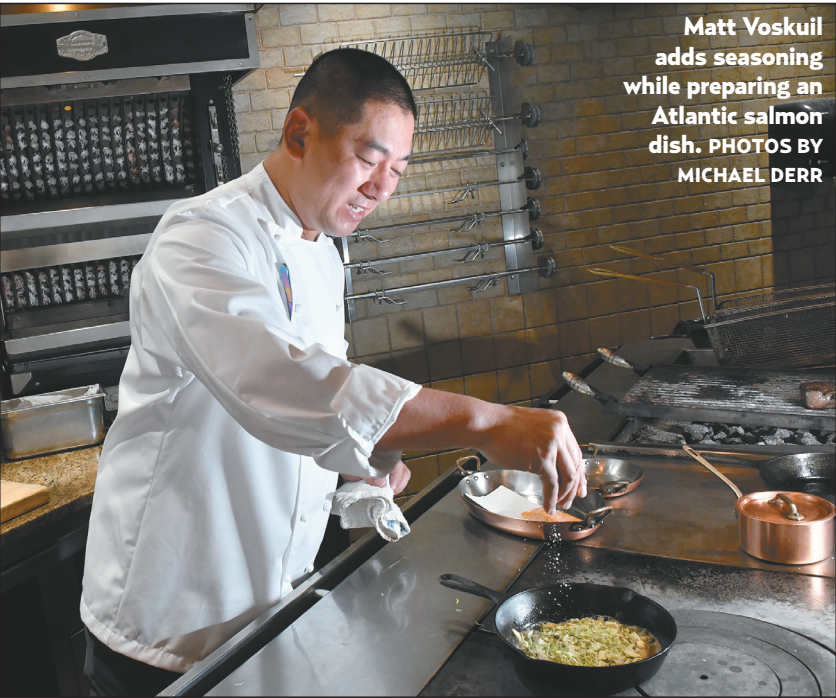


off the lip

# Breeze in place



Matt Voskuil adds seasoning while preparing an Atlantic salmon dish. PHOTOS BY MICHAEL DERR

**MATT VOSKUIL** | Executive Chef, Spiced Pear at The Chanler

Newport Restaurant Week is back March 2 though 11 with more than 45 restaurants offering three-course prix fixe \$16 lunches and \$35 dinners. The 10-day stretch is always a good time for introductions to new faces on the local culinary scene. That includes Matt Voskuil, who arrived at The Chanler's fine dining restaurant Spiced Pear just over a month ago. The 42-year-old native of Seoul, South Korea, who grew up in Wisconsin has already made his mark on the menu with a succulent venison loin with oatmeal, black trumpet mushrooms, and huckleberries on the dinner menu and an Atlantic salmon in a softly sweet white cream sauce on the chef's tasting menu. He pursued a culinary track at Kendall College and then held posts in Chicago and Canoe Bay resort in Wisconsin before heading to Las Vegas, where he spent the past few years as chef de cuisine at the Venetian. During his time in Las Vegas, Voskuil opened Joël Robuchon's restaurant in 2005, worked with Michael Mina, and worked with John Joho at Eiffel Tower Restaurant. BY KATHLEEN TROOST-CRAMER [@kthroostc](#)

**What's your favorite cuisine to work with?**

French. It's nuanced and there's a lot of technique to execute it properly. I'm a little bit old school in that I like tasting layers of things, and knowing there's some work that went into the food. So many young chefs these days confuse sensation with flavor. Like "Oh, it's sweet," or "Oh, it's hot," like spicy. Those are sensations, not flavors. So for me, developing and working with flavor takes some skill. I really appreciate French cuisine because it is about building flavor, complexities and combinations of flavors that really are satisfying to the soul. Those are the kinds of things that I like to work with, and that's the goal

for the food here as we start on the journey here at The Chanler.

**How does the venison loin and Atlantic salmon you've added to the menu reflect your style?**

These are French-American style. There's a lot of French technique, some American ingredients. These would embody the style of cuisine that I see for the restaurant, for sure. The venison is the essence of the Northeast winter on a plate. The salmon's cream sauce is just yellow onions, cream, and salt. You're taking three ingredients and building something with nuanced flavor, a little bit of depth to it. To me that's one of the

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## VENISON WITH OATMEAL, BLACK TRUMPET MUSHROOMS, AND HUCKLEBERRIES

SPICED PEAR EXECUTIVE CHEF MATT VOSKUIL

Serves 4

**VENISON**

- 4 – 6 oz. portions of boneless venison loin
- 1 bottle red wine
- 1 carrot, medium dice
- 2 ribs celery, medium dice
- 1 yellow onion, medium dice
- 1 tsp. juniper berry
- 1 tsp. black peppercorn
- 1 sprig thyme
- 1 sprig rosemary
- 1 bay leaf

**METHOD**

Combine red wine, carrot, celery, onion, juniper, peppercorns, thyme, rosemary and bay leaf in a small sauce pan. Bring to a boil and remove from heat immediately. Chill the mixture completely. Once cool, place the venison portions in the marinade and refrigerate for at least six hours. Remove venison and set aside for cooking later. Strain aromatics from the wine and reserve the wine to use in the sauce.

**OATMEAL**

- 2 cups rolled oats
- 1 shallot, minced
- 2 oz. unsalted butter
- 3½ cups heavy cream
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 2 Tbsp. parsley, finely chopped

**METHOD**

Melt butter in a medium sauce pan over medium heat. Add the minced shallot and sweat until translucent. Season with salt and pepper. Add rolled oats and toast lightly. Add cream and cook slowly until most of the cream is absorbed by the oats. Season with salt and pepper again. The mixture should be very thick. Remove from heat and let sit at room temperature for 15 minutes. Stir occasionally to help the mixture cool evenly. Stir in the eggs and parsley until evenly combined. Transfer the mixture to a baking pan and chill in the refrigerator for four hours. Once cold, cut into four even portions using a ring cutter or mold.

**SAUCE**

- 1 shallot, sliced
- 1 Tbsp. grapeseed oil
- red wine from marinade
- 2 cups veal demi-glace
- 3 oz. huckleberries

**METHOD**

In a small sauce pan over medium heat, sweat the shallot until translucent. Season with salt. Add the reserved wine and increase heat to high. Reduce until almost all of the wine has evaporated. Add the veal demi-glace and reduce by half over medium heat. Skim any impurities from the surface as it slowly reduces. Strain the sauce through a fine mesh strainer and then add the huckleberries. Simmer for 10 minutes and then keep warm until the rest of the dish is prepared.

**FINAL COOKING**

- 2 Tbsp. grapeseed oil
- 3 Tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 sprig thyme
- 1 clove garlic

**VEGETABLES**

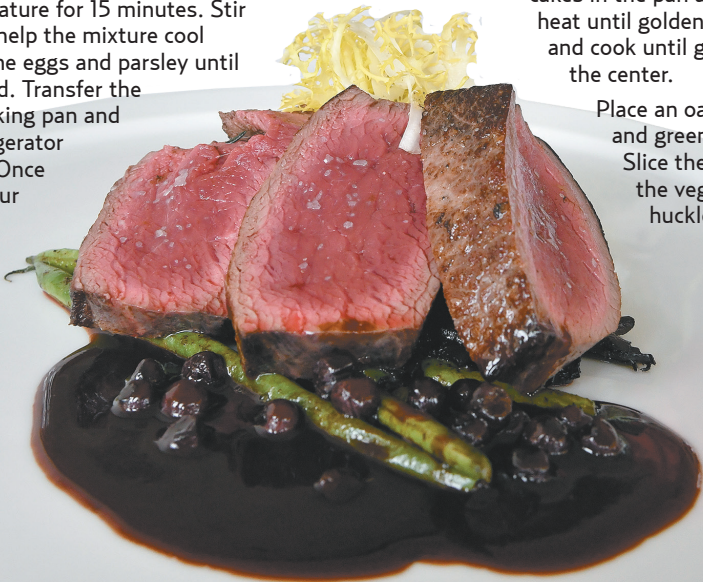
- 20 each black trumpet mushrooms, cleaned
- 20 each green beans, trimmed and blanched

**METHOD**

Season the venison with salt and pepper. Heat a cast iron pan over high heat and sear the venison in the grapeseed oil. Turn the venison over and sear the other side. Place 1 Tbsp. butter, thyme and garlic in the pan. Reduce heat to medium and baste the venison on each side for about 2 minutes. Remove and let rest on a wire rack. Place the mushrooms and green beans in the pan, season with salt and pepper and cook until heated through. Remove from the pan and keep warm.

While the venison is cooking, in a nonstick saute pan, melt 2 Tbsp. of butter. Place the oatmeal cakes in the pan and cook over medium heat until golden brown. Flip the cakes and cook until golden brown and warm in the center.

Place an oatmeal cake, mushrooms and green beans on each plate. Slice the venison and place over the vegetables. Finish with the huckleberry sauce.



The succulent venison dish already appears on the Spiced Pear dinner menu.





From the desert to the sea, Executive Chef Matt Voskuil has arrived at The Spiced Pear at The Chanler after a long tenure in Las Vegas. He presents Atlantic salmon with brussel sprouts, sweet onion puree and candied pecans from his chef tasting menu. PHOTO BY MICHAEL DERR

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hallmarks of great cooking: taking simple ingredients and working with them to develop an experience on the palate.

#### Why did you pursue a culinary career?

I think it was just fun. I went through high school thinking I was going to be a lawyer. I always enjoyed the idea of law, I enjoyed the challenge of solving problems through language. But I started cooking when I was 14 years old. I became a dishwasher, and after about six weeks they promoted me to cook. By the end of the summer, I had the keys to the restaurant and was opening the restaurant every day.

#### At age 14?

It was probably very illegal (*laughs*). It was a very small town. I cooked throughout high school. The summer before I went to college I went to work at a really nice country club, and it was there that I worked with European chefs for the first time and was exposed to more fine dining cooking, and I found it to be fun and challenging, and rewarding in a way that law probably wasn't going to be. You can't take it home with you, the feedback is pretty much instantaneous. I found the pace of it to be pretty exciting. So before I left for college that year I expressed an interest in culinary school. I had an academic scholarship to go to college, so my parents encouraged me to go for a year and check it out. I did, I came back home the next summer and still said, "I want to get off this path and onto the path of a culinary career." So they agreed to send me to culinary school. This is back before being a chef was popular. My parents were always very supportive.

#### How did you find this position as executive chef at The Chanler?

It found me. The owner had started looking around for a chef, and I had previously spoken to an agent out of New York City who gave me a call and said, "We have this interesting project in Newport." At the time

I didn't know Newport was in Rhode Island. I probably went through the first two or three days of speaking to them thinking we were talking about California. Then I spoke to someone finally who was talking about Newport as, not the Hamptons but the same sort of feel where it's a small town, and I was like, "I'm sorry, where exactly are we talking about?" But I came out here the 22nd and 23rd of December, saw the property, met with the owner. Her vision for what she wanted really aligned with the things I would like to do. If you don't have a great relationship with the owner and feel like you can help each other attain goals, it wouldn't have been worth moving across the country for. But her aspirations here really match mine. I can see the future here. We're going to put together some really exciting food and beverage offerings that really support the experience of the hotel.

#### Such as?

One of the unique things about The Chanler is that all the rooms are decorated differently. There's a Renaissance Room, an Empire Room, Moroccan, Cape Cod, Nantucket. So no two guests are having the same experience. They aren't seeing the property in the same way. Because of that, I feel it's our responsibility down here at the food and beverage side to take all those separate experiences and create something that ties the whole thing together. We're using the decor choices as jumping-off points for the cuisine as we develop menus. My initial take on everything is that the restaurant is going to be more of an American-French type of cuisine, and for the outdoor menu I'm going to be using Mediterranean social.

#### Have you ever been an executive chef elsewhere?

Yes. I was the executive chef at Bistro Zinc in Chicago, American Fish at Aria in Las Vegas. I owned my own recipe development business for a couple of years. I was

contracted to provide 540 unique dishes to a company in Florida that was building a home delivery kit, finished, catered, delivered fresh food, that they could launch in New York City. We started that project in 2007, and because of what happened to the economy the gentleman who hired me was going into a financial headwind and we gave up on that project in 2010. We were working with Asian chefs, Italian chefs, French chefs. I was building my arsenal of food and nutrition knowledge. It was a great learning experience.

#### How did your wife, Heidi, adjust to the move to Newport?

She loves it. She put up with Las Vegas for me for a long, long, long, long time. She hates the heat. I think last summer we had something like 50-some-odd days in a row over 110 degrees. She absolutely loves it here. She's been touring mansions, going around and meeting people.

#### Have you had a chance to sightsee yet?

No. This (*smiling and gesturing around the restaurant*) is the sight that I see every day.

#### You've worked in big cities, you've worked in small towns. How does Newport compare?

Oh, Newport's huge compared to Canoe Bay. There isn't as much to do here as there is in Las Vegas, as far as I can tell right now. I'm sure Newport people would disagree to some extent (*laughs*).

#### NEWPORT RESTAURANT WEEK

March 2-11, 2018

**e** Visit [discovernewport.org/newport-restaurant-week](http://discovernewport.org/newport-restaurant-week) for participating restaurants and their prix fixe menus.

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*Chateau-sur-Mer, The Elms & Marble House open at 10 am.*

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