

FUSION WITH A MULTICULTURAL TWIST

THE CAMPBELL HOUSE RE-OPENS BY NICK POUST

Looking at The Campbell House Inn and Restaurant's menu, it is no wonder co-owner and chef Brett Rauber has a difficult time classifying the food he serves. After all, many countries are represented. Dig into Spanish empanadas, Greek lamb spanakopita, Italian lasagna, Thai mushroom spring rolls or French chicken paillard, just to name a few. After some thought, he described his food as "multicultural cuisine as someone taught French technique would do it."

The Campbell House, which was built in 1892, welcomed new ownership this past October when Rauber and his father re-opened the restaurant. Wednesday through Saturday, guests are treated to an array of imaginative, unique and artfully prepared dishes that may look minimal but are deceptively filling, satisfying and comforting. A wide variety of wines complement the appetizers, salads, soups and entrees nicely, and carefully crafted desserts such as cheesecake or apple crisp with a dollop of ice cream can cap off the meal.

Rauber says his restaurant is high-end and its service is exceptional, but, amid dim mood lighting with a date-night feel, he doesn't characterize the atmosphere as frou-frou.

"It's not a stuffy environment," he says. "It's very laidback." The Campbell House Inn and Restaurant seats



SOUS CHEF CARLOS CERONE WORKING ON A SELECTION OF SMALL PLATES

PHOTO BY TODD COOPER

BLUEBERRY BALSAMIC SALMON WITH WILD MUSHROOM RISOTTO CAKE AND RADISHES



PHOTO BY BENJAMIN LUNDBERG

up to 30, and with its spacious layout, it doesn't feel overcrowded. "We don't pack people in," he says. "We have plenty of space. It's very leisurely and relaxing."

Rauber partly attributes his love for the multicultural dishes he creates to his time as a patron in New York restaurants, where he was around many different kinds of food, whether he was in a fine or casual dining environment.

He was influenced even more by his time in Chicago, where he worked in restaurants and continued to learn about dishes and the tricks of the trade. While there, he was told that owning a restaurant could be compared to a theater production, and he treats The Campbell House Inn and Restaurant as such.

"The table is the stage and the diners are the stars," he says. To satisfy those stars, he stresses the importance on spicing up the cuisine and not just giving diners a dish that is served elsewhere.

"Even though people say they want whatever is in season, I think a lot of diners, when push comes to shove, want some kind of hybrid," he says. "They don't want that degree of rigidity."

Whether he is serving chicken, lamb, pork belly or wild salmon, Rauber lets his imagination produce art on a plate, but as visually stimulating as it is now, he wants to improve upon his creativity.

"I do want to be more playful with cuisine," he says. "You do eat with your eyes first, and I think a lot of times I get the sense that once the server puts the plate down, people get really excited to eat it. They feel like they have found a gem. I think that's something that we really like, offering that sense of discovery to people. That it's a little bit different than what I'm getting most nights out in Eugene." ■

The Campbell House Inn and Restaurant, 252 Pearl St., is open 5 to 9 pm W-Su, 343-1119, www.campbellhouse.com

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