

WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED TO MTV PHILIPPINES? BY JAMIE WILSON

ROGUE

LIFESTYLES ON THE EDGE

OCTOBER 2010

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FRANCO
AN EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW

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SHEDS HER NAÏVETÉ AND RECLAIMS HER MOJO

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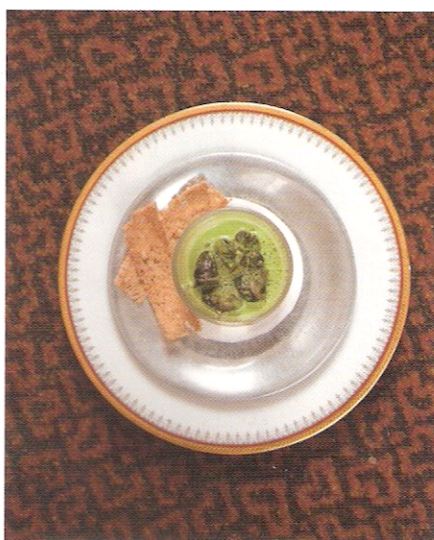
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NATURAL SELECTION

In a culinary playing field rife with experimental celebri-cooks, The Peninsula's new executive chef, Freddy Schmidt, stands out for remaining loyal to classical techniques and pure flavors

FOR THE PENINSULA MANILA'S

new executive chef Freddy Thierry Philippe Schmidt, the perfect dish possesses a "balance of flavor and texture that relaxes one's taste buds." During a four-course, wine-paired meal at The Pen's Old Manila restaurant, guests discovered the unforgettable effect of this classically trained French chef's daring yet simple cooking philosophy.

Whether diving into a mouthwatering duck liver terrine with spices wrapped in cured ham and mango chutney, or a perfectly cooked oven-roasted lamb with natural jus, olive crust, and aubergine compote, Schmidt's uncomplicated but innovative spirit was infused into every bite.

Schmidt believes in emphasizing natural flavors, along with the freshness and quality of each ingredient. "If you don't have this, it changes the recipe and it won't be what you envisioned," he says. "The less you manipulate, the better the flavor."

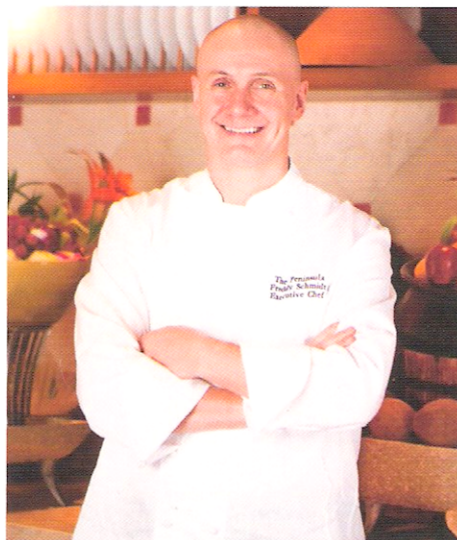
But sometimes, he admits, rules have to be broken: "This means doing things differently, but being able to explain the reasons behind them."

As The Pen's executive chef, he oversees all of the hotel's restaurants, along with room service and catering for special events. Schmidt shares creating dishes to satisfy a wide variety of palates is challenging, but a task he approaches with conviction. "It's

about commitment and common sense.

That's the secret," he says. "If you believe in what you do and use the right cooking process, everyone will like and understand it, even if it's new and different."

Schmidt also prioritizes the training of the people who work in his kitchen. Stressing the importance of culinary education, he says: "Filipinos are hungry to learn and go to the next level, but it takes time. Each person should know what a good carrot or tomato is."



Backed by 30 solid years of culinary work that began in his hometown of Alsace, France, Schmidt possesses an admirable range of exposure and experience, obtained from decades of exploring cuisines from different corners of the world. Yet after a hard day's work, he still finds great comfort in common fare like a slice of pizza or a club sandwich. "A great chef is a 'daily life chef'—he can make simple things like a good Caesar salad," he muses. "Some chefs want to do creative, original things. I believe the simplest is the one most appreciated. Sometimes fusion becomes confusion."

At the end of our meal, Chef Freddy—the nickname he goes by inside the kitchen—came to our table to check on the effect of his culinary masterpieces on his diners. The first thing he did spoke of what kind of chef he is: I was about to dip my fork into a crunchy mille-feuille with passion fruit and chocolate when I noticed his hand reaching out to turn my plate around. He then flashed a disarmingly warm smile. The waiter had apparently served the dish in the wrong direction, and Schmidt immediately noticed and fixed it. As with all works of art, the beauty is really in the little details.

SUNSHINE LICHAUCO DE LEON