

# Cognoscenti

## magazine

**Because life is short**

RIVER'S END

JENNER (SONOMA), CALIFORNIA

Arriving at the **River's End** restaurant, we were seated at a lovely corner table offering broadly panoramic views of the Russian River and the Pacific Ocean. The setting was appealingly rustic, with candlelight contributing a romantic touch for the dinner hour.

Chef David Dahlquist prepares a rich and flavorful menu. He also deserves high ratings for his aesthetic presentations, with plates exhibiting painstaking food "architecture" more characteristic of Europe than America. In season, the chef draws on the restaurant's abundant organic gardens for much of his fresh produce, deftly contrasting the paintbrush-bright colors of edible flowers to the greenness of salads and using items like chocolate-mint geranium leaf in highlighting his main courses.

In the appetizer, combining pan-seared scallops with seasonal sautéed mushrooms, smoked tomatoes, goat cheese and black truffle oil yielded a delightfully pungent result.

For the main courses, roasted halibut with lobster sauce was absolutely delicious—although perhaps too rich for those of us who tastes have become increasingly attuned to the low-fat ways of "California cuisine." Sautéed jumbo gulf prawns in ginger and garlic were finished in Madeira cream sauce.

The paired bottle of Paul Hobbs Chardonnay 2000 (Russian River Valley) showed cedar and smoke. In the dessert, the crème brûlée with vanilla bean and chocolate Grenache was very good—one of the few (surprisingly infrequent!) successes at reproducing this gourmet stand-by which we've encountered on this side of the Atlantic.

At meal's end, Proprietor Bert Rangel joined visiting **Cognoscenti Magazine** editors over glasses of vintage

tawny port to chat about his love of fine food and wine. He makes the restaurant's wine selections himself, describing it as his "raison d'être." Says Bert: "Every table should enjoy a bottle of wine. It's the lost art of dining."

We couldn't agree more.

This article was written by Nicole Medvecky-Riggs, Contributing Editor to *Cognoscenti Magazine*. Photo courtesy of *The Inn at Occidental/River's End*.

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*Sunset view from River's End*

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