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Recent restaurant reviews in *US Airways* magazine

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ROOM WITH A VIEW

Named for its location on the 19th floor of the stately Park Hyatt at the Bellevue, XIX Restaurant opened early this year, bringing contemporary cuisine and décor to this Philadelphia landmark. Opened in 1904 and built in French Renaissance style, the hotel is smack-dab in the center of town, affording XIX offers one of the best views in the city.

A circular raw bar situated beneath an ornate 36-foot domed ceiling takes center stage, spotlighting the restaurant's forte: fresh seafood. A shellfish platter changes daily and includes raw oysters from several locales along the East Coast. The French sommelier will expertly match each course with one of 40 unique wines available by the glass. A fruity Spanish *alberriño* complements raw oysters from Cape Cod and steamed clams with hand-cut linguini, while the fuller-bodied Californian Qupe Marsanne is delicious with wild king salmon served with chanterelles and artichoke puree, and black sea bass with cardamom and roasted baby turnips.

The tables face giant Palladian windows looking eastward toward Rittenhouse Square and north to City Hall. Call in advance for a window seat and, if you can arrange it, arrive early enough to watch the room turn gold at sunset and the city light up below.

XIX Restaurant is located at Broad and Walnut streets and open daily for lunch dinner. To view the menu visit parkphiladelphia.hyatt.com.

--Cathleen McCarthy

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DINE LIKE A KING

Internationally-acclaimed Chef Jean-Marie Lacroix, who brought four-star dining to the Philadelphia Four Seasons, has created another gem at the Rittenhouse Hotel, with fresh, contemporary cuisine and décor to match.

If your idea of a good meal involves pasta, chicken or a juicy ribeye, stick to the à la carte menu. The prix fixe "taster menu"—three to five courses with dessert thrown in—offers only quail, rabbit, veal, two kinds of wild boar, and exotic seafood dishes such as raw white tuna layered with watermelon and Maine scallops with grilled peaches and foie gras. Chocolate lovers, save room for the cocoa-almond cake with vanilla lime sauce.

If you're ready for a truly unforgettable meal, consider dining at the chef's table in the restaurant's kitchen—the new big splurge in Philadelphia. (Le Bec Fin, while a wonderful splurge, has been around for three decades.) Lacroix offers an exclusive seating in his kitchen Monday through Thursday for \$165/person, sans tax, tip and

beverage. As many as seven guests can have their meal custom-prepared by the affable chef. Each course includes different wines selected by the sommelier. Don't worry, you will dine in style. This particular kitchen table is carved from granite and lit by a Philippe Starck chandelier.

Lacroix Restaurant is in the Rittenhouse Hotel at 210 W. Rittenhouse Square. Call (800) 635-1042 or visit www.lacroixrestaurant.com for reservations.

--Cathleen McCarthy

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ANSILL PLATEFULS

David Ansill, chef-owner of the tiny but popular Pif in South Philadelphia, recently opened a corner bistro just a block from the crazy carnival of South Street. Little platefuls of exotic fare such as venison tartare, scrambled duck eggs and lamb's tongue are offered with friendly but knowledgeable service and a good beer and wine list—or, for a \$15 corkage fee, you can bring your own.

Some of the best dishes are the simplest, like the roasted peppers with pine nuts and goat cheese. But you can be wildly adventurous here without breaking the bank. Four dollars lets you try crostinis topped with sea urchins or bone marrow, prociutto made with duck or wild boar. Ceviche is a specialty, reinvented each night with subtle flavors—on the night we visited, chopped orange and mint.

Ansill is one place where you may prefer to eat in the bar lounge rather than the separate dining room, unless you want to watch your food prepared in the open kitchen. Tables border street-level windows and a sleek, dramatically-lit bar decorated with Art Nouveau-style wood sculpture.

Ansill (ansillfoodandwine.com) is located at 627 S. Third Street, at the corner of Bainbridge. No reservations required; just show up after 5:30.

--Cathleen McCarthy