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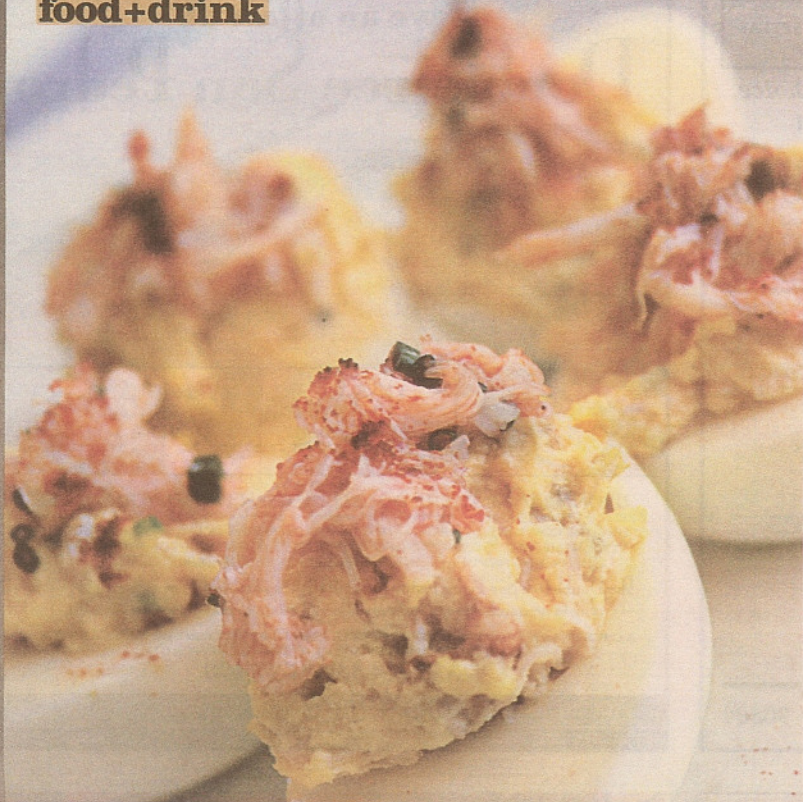
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## American Renaissance

SUZANNE TRACHT BRINGS HER CLASSICS TO TOWN

// BY MILES CLEMENTS

THE MENU POSTED OUTSIDE TRACHT'S reads a lot like something you might find at a basement pot luck: steaks, roasts, deviled eggs, puddings. But anyone who has eaten at Jar—Chef Suzanne Tracht's tremendously popular LA restaurant, from which her Ocean Boulevard chophouse was spun off—knows that it's not quite that simple. Tracht's aim, after all, isn't just to slop together a few plates of culinary nostalgia—it's to re-imagine the American classics.

It seems only fitting, then, that Tracht's is set up inside the newly-renovated Renaissance Hotel, as the two seem to complement each other in their pursuit of reinvention. What's more, it's because of that partnership that the restaurant replicates a lot of the hotel's design cues: parasol-like chandeliers; dark, striped woods; high-backed leather chairs. But whatever the inspiration, it works because everything inside Tracht's seems open to

the restaurant's desire to pull from both the mod past and the contemporary present.

And the restaurant wastes no time in straddling that divide with its starters. Most of Tracht's appetizers come from the sea: black mussels paired with a lobster béarnaise, oysters awash in black pepper and ponzu. But like any good American meal, Tracht's food is hearty—so it's best to start light. The lobster cocktail is a nice, cool choice, made unique with a handful of crisp, julienned mango. The summer salad—a few slices of heirloom tomatoes so thick they could pass as steaks—comes in clean and fresh, too, with pepper and salt and only the most refreshing herbs scattered on top.

But at its core, Tracht's is a steakhouse—and it shows. The restaurant offers seven different cuts of beef and five different sauces. Statistically alluring, perhaps, but you can actually do just fine by avoiding steak altogether. In fact, one of Tracht's

signature dishes is the pot roast, a sizable hunk of beef slow-cooked until it nearly falls apart under your fork. The roast is topped with onions caramelized to a deep, sweet brown and flanked by a couple soft baby carrots. It's everything that you remember about your childhood, just finally executed with grace and skill. There are also a few lighter dishes to be had (like the perfectly-cooked salmon), but Tracht's specializes in heftier American cuisine—and they do it exceedingly well.

All of Tracht's entrees come unaccompanied, as the sides are ordered a la carte and served family style. Apparently content in numbers, the restaurant offers 11 different choices, covering everything from French fries and roasted asparagus to duck fried rice and sautéed pea tendrils. Easily the best side is Tracht's take on the stuffed potato. The restaurant starts with Japanese purple yams—tiny little balls that look and feel like potatoes but whose dark, Lakers-purple flesh tastes just like a yam—then splits them open and stuffs them with crème fraiche and chives—a combination so right that it merits a double- or even a triple-ordered.

For dessert, there's a rotating selection of ice creams and sorbets, tarts and pies. But—believe it or not—Tracht's signature is pudding. Chocolate is probably the most popular, but there's also butterscotch, an intensely dark and rich pudding that tastes a lot like a good pecan pie. And what's more, the pudding is so dense and thick that it can just about hold up a spoon—a testament to just how many eggs are in the dish and to just how good it actually is.

Although Tracht's neoclassicism is admittedly an already tried-and-true concept, there are few, if any, chophouses that can do it as well as Tracht's. And besides, the restaurant also offers something that Long Beach has never really tasted before: celebrity. Chef Tracht, after all, is well known and highly regarded in most food circles, acclaimed for her unpretentious style and her thoughtful execution. So it's no surprise that after less than a month, Tracht's is already one of the city's finest high-end restaurants, with spot-on service, elegant décor, and simple, refined food that Tracht perfected at Jar and that Chef de Cuisine Jessica Alexander now perfects on Ocean Boulevard. It feels a lot like the beginning of Long Beach's own little renaissance.

[HELP!]

### SERVING THE PEOPLE WHO SERVE US

"What's the best tip I ever received as a bartender? Well, I can tell you about the strangest tip I ever got. A man who had been sitting at my bar for maybe an hour—or an hour-and-a-half—and consumed about 5 or 6 drinks in that time got up to leave and said, 'I left you a tip under the napkin,' and then walked out. Sure enough, under the napkin he had left a small handful of little blue pills. I asked another customer (one who had some, let's say, 'experience in pharmaceuticals') what he thought they were. He plucked one of the pills from my hand, popped it into his mouth, and said, 'I'll tell you in 20 minutes.' Fifteen minutes later he walked past me and said they were Valium and that he would take them off my hands if I didn't want them. I let him have five."

// ANONYMOUS

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