



FEATURE

Marvellous MAUDE

IF YOU DO NOTHING ELSE ON YOUR NEXT TRIP TO BEVERLY HILLS, BE SURE YOU VISIT CURTIS STONE'S INTIMATE FINE DINING ROOM, MAUDE. BY SHONAGH WALKER



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ow wonderful to be able to close your eyes, spin a globe and decide that wherever your finger may randomly land will be the focus of your working life for the next three months. Welcome to the world of Curtis Stone and his talented team at Maude, Beverly Hills.

While the process is actually more intricately planned and strategised than simply pinning a thumb tack on a world map, this is pretty much how the 24-seater fine dining restaurant has been operating for the past 12 months.



For the first four years of operation, the luxe, cosy eatery concentrated on one ingredient per month, creating a culinary event around it, with a wine list meticulously curated to pair back. These days, celeb chef Curtis takes a back seat and allows head sommelier Andrey Tolmachyov to drive the direction of the four menus produced each year, each designed around a different wine region of the world.

'After doing 48 menus with no dish repeated, we wanted something completely new,' Stone explains over the jaw-dropping degustation dinner I was lucky enough to experience in May.

'The wine program had really blossomed, with such amazing and talented sommeliers, but the pairings were always done last. We decided to work backwards; go to a wine region, be inspired by the wine and the local regional dishes, then talk to the wine team about what they wanted and what would pair well with that wine, and create a menu from that.'

Their first stop was Rioja in Spain. Next came Burgundy in France, swiftly followed by the central Coast of California, which is the menu I devoured. Currently the region in the spotlight is Piedmont in Italy, possibly the most prestigious wine region in the world.

The team travels quite close to the date of menu launch and fastidiously researches wineries and local growers, sampling wares and testing recipes, before returning to Maude HQ in Beverly Hills and devising a decadent three-level pairing of wines and 10 course tasting menu to match.

Says Tolmachyov: 'The Classic Pairing features wines from the high acid and tannins found in Nebbiolo varietals to the more feminine Barbera. The Reserve Pairing deepens the tasting experience to include premium Barolo, Barbaresco and Dolcetto reds and lends a greater complexity to the region, featuring more exclusive bottlings and rarer vintages. The Grand Pairing is the most special selection, with some elusive choices from the most revered winemakers of Piedmont. From old houses to more modern estates, back vintages from the highest quality producers exemplify these pours.'

As for the food, executive chef Justin Hilbert has unearthed every delicacy the region has to offer. From hazelnuts, cheese, chocolates and the region's iconic Alba white truffles, the tasting menu is decadent and adventurous. And it's worth every single kilojoule. There are odes to regional favourites such as bagna cauda, vitello tonnato,

risotto and of course, plenty of pasta – from agnolotti and tortellini to Piedmontese tajarin, a thin, long pasta that respects the egg yolk.

While a 10 course degustation may seem an arduous eating task, it's far from it. Each serving is perfectly sized and balanced in such a way that the flavours of one dish lead the palate effortlessly to the next.

Towards the end of the meal, you're left feeling elegantly sufficed, but perhaps just wanting that little something extra. Just as well then, the experience finishes with a visit to the climate controlled wine loft that sits above the restaurant.

With the temperature set to 15 degrees Celsius, the array of wines on offer is inexhaustible and the banquet of pastries, desserts and other such sweets, created that day by pastry chef Yesenia Cruz, is the ideal punctuation to a truly unique experience.

The Piedmont menu completes the inaugural year of creating menus in this unique manner, and we can be sure to expect an even higher level of excellence in the coming year. At the time of writing, the team was unsure which region would feature for the first quarter of 2019, but there were murmurs ranging from Australia to Argentina. Whatever it may be, Tolmachyov assures 'some rare old bottlings, uncovered gems and the classics that have made the region one of the best in the world.'



WHERE IS IT?

Maude
212S Beverly Drive
Beverly Hills, CA.
Open Tuesday to Sunday,
5.30- 9.30PM
+ 1 310 859 3418
www.mauderestaurant.com.au



Pics of Maude and The Piedmont Menu by Stan Lee



Where to stay

FEATURE



The Montage Beverly Hills

If you want modern luxury with a touch of vintage Hollywood, abundant comfort and a team of discreet staff who can't do enough to make your stay sensational, do not look past The Montage Beverly Hills.

Located a three-minute drive from Maude, with complementary limo service for all hotel guests, it recently served as the uber-glamorous façade for the hotel owned by Jane Fonda's character in the 2018 movie *The Book Club*.

Sadly, the film didn't do its remarkable lobby, stunning rooms, or its magnificent rooftop pool justice. Put simply – this hotel is so wonderful, you will not want to leave. In fact, during my three days stay I only left the premises twice – once to dine at Maude and the second time to soak up some jazz at West Hollywood's hottest new club Delilah.

To be honest, despite the lure of Los Angeles around me, I had zero desire to leave. Arriving flustered and emotional after a fairly hectic and stressful work week, The Montage and its team lulled me into a state of utter relaxation within seconds. While my room was being readied, the manager took me on a tour through the hotel, which wowed me to my core, which isn't easy - I've seen more than my fair share of top hotels in my time as a beauty, travel and lifestyle writer and I'm not easily impressed.

The state-of-the-art spa with its whirlpool, steam room, sauna, co-ed mineral pool and fitness centre, means you can turn your stay into a wellness break should you choose to.

The expansive yet cosy bar lounge makes a splendid meeting place for friends, and stays open well into the early hours. Choose to sit inside or make the most of the agreeable Californian climate and opt for a table on the outdoor terrace overlooking the Beverly

Canon Gardens.

Be sure to indulge in '15 at 10.15'. Nightly at 10.15pm, the bar offers a curated selection of \$15 libations including speciality cocktails, sommelier-recommended wines and craft beers.

The restaurant, open for dinner nightly, serves fresh, seasonally-driven cuisine set in a garden-style interior which extends to a lush patio, while The Café keeps you satiated all day, serving breakfast and lunch before transitioning into a wine and champagne bar with light meals in the evening.

But it was the Rooftop Grill that made the biggest dent in my credit card, and deservedly so. The expansive eatery sits atop the hotel, adjacent to the breathtaking pool area. My partner and I spent all three days soaking up the sun, sipping rose and enjoying nearly everything the menu had to offer, moving only from table to poolside cabana to relax into an even deeper bliss.

From check-in to check-out, my stay was seamless and nothing was too much to ask. Want a vegan burger? No problem. Need a ride to or from dinner? The luxury town car, complete with a 'star-encrusted' interior roof and delightful driver, was ready within seconds. Can't fit all your shopping in your suitcase? The concierge will arrange to purchase a second suitably sized case on your behalf and will ensure it is suited to your tastes and matches the rest of your luggage, without you even asking. They're just that good.

As I said, I've stayed in some of the best hotels in the world throughout my 30-year career and The Montage Beverly Hills is easily in the Top Two. In fact, I loved it so much that I'm considering booking a trip back soon, simply to spend another week luxuriating by its pool. **CBM**
www.montagehotels.com/beverlyhills