

Loews Ventana gets master chef; former Loews chef to open eatery

DINA L. DOOLEN

Published: 12.07.2006

Tucson is gaining a master French chef and getting a new restaurant from another.

Mark Ehrler is replacing Phillippe Trosch as executive chef of Loews Ventana Canyon Resort.

Ehrler starts Monday.

Trosch will be going into partnership with his friend Gaetano "Gavi" Colaleo to open what is tentatively called La Taverna di Phillippe and Gavi, 6960 E. Sunrise Drive.

"It will be very warm . . . serving comfort food from France and Italy," Trosch said.

Colaleo has four restaurants in Tucson, including Piazza Gavi, across the street from his venture with Trosch. His wife, Natalie Scott, also the company's attorney, says the new restaurant will have prices similar to the other Gavis, but will be distinct from Piazza Gavi.

According to a Loews announcement, Ehrler is the most decorated chef in the Loews company. He is a Master Chef of France and the only chef to receive the AAA Five Diamond ranking in two different restaurants of the same hotel.

"He will help solidify Tucson's growing reputation in the culinary world," Loews Managing Director Brian Johnson said in a statement.

Ehrler comes from Loews Miami Beach Hotel, where he was executive chef.

He is a native of Antibes, on the French Riviera between Cannes and Nice. He trained with world-renowned chefs, including Alain Ducasse, Jacques Maximin and Andre Daguin.

He told starchefs.com, "Those chefs helped confirm that my father and my mother's cooking - traditional from Nice - was right. At the time, classical French cuisine was heavier. When I worked with Jacques and Alain, they were cooking with olive oil and making the same things that I ate growing up."

Trosch led Loews' Ventana Room to Five Diamond Ratings from AAA the last two years. He had been at Loews since 2002.

Ventana was the only Tucson restaurant and one of four in the state to get AAA's Five Diamonds rating.

"You know, I came to Tucson to get the five diamonds," said Trosch, a native of Biarritz, a resort town on France's Bay of Biscay. "Now, I wanted to take some time off and work on some things."

He expects La Taverna, which will seat about 60, to be open by late January, but he is not rushing.

"It will be a small menu, but with top-notch and fresh ingredients," he said. "We want it to be a home away from home."