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## James Suckling Uncorked

### Bling Bling on the Plate and in the Glass

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LOS ANGELES -- I had dinner in a hipster-sushi-bar-style (i.e. Joel Robuchon L'Atelier in Paris and in Vegas), European-Japanese-fusion restaurant in West L.A., and I was blown away. Maybe I was influenced by the incredible bottle of 1999 Marcassin Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Marcassin Vineyard, but this was a no-BS-no-flash place that is off the radar screen -- especially for a large number of people in La La who only care about the buzz of a place and not the food on the plate. It's jeans and t-shirts -- cool and relaxed -- and resembles a simple sushi bar with its no-frills interior.

Restaurant Orris has been around for a couple of years here on Sawtelle Boulevard, which has a high concentration of Far Eastern restaurants. And chef Hideo Yamashiro, originally from Okinawa, has been cooking in the greater Los Angeles area for about two decades. His restaurant in South Pasadena, Shiro, is well known in that area.

The 58-year-old has a deft hand for combining hearty European cuisine with the precision and emphasis on ingredients of Japanese gastronomy. For example, a simple spicy ahi tuna tartare served with small toasts was meaty, fresh and succulent while grilled Alaskan king crab legs were smoky, almost sweet, with a cucumber salad on the side. Tempura squash flowers filled with crabmeat were lightly crisp and delicious. Simply grilled lamb cutlets were flavorful, almost gamey. The Marcassin went well with everything, even though the chef said he prefers white wine with most of his dishes.

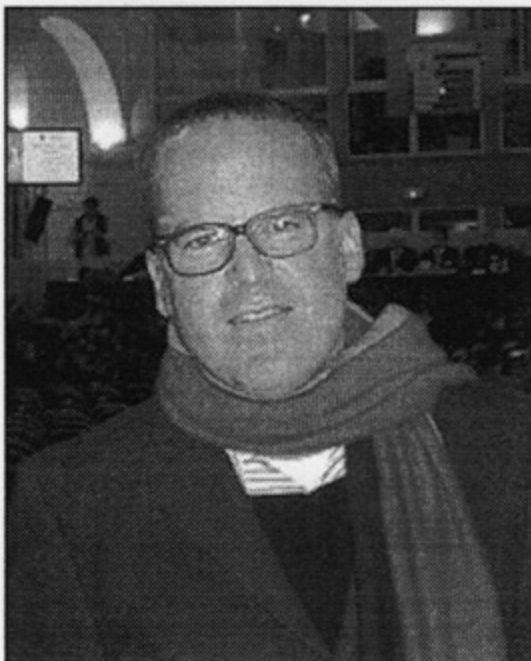
We gave Shiro a glass of the Marcassin, and he said it was one of the best Pinots he had every tasted. "A customer the other night gave me a glass of Domaine de la Romanée-Conti Grands Échézeaux 1993, and it was nothing compared to this," he said, sipping the wine with a big smile.

Here is my tasting note for the 1999 Marcassin Pinot (if I can properly read my notes scribbled on the back of a menu!): "Incredible aromas of coffee, cigar, plums and spices follow through to a full and rich palate with loads of fruit and super silky tannins. This shakes you with excitement. It reminds me of the some of the great Jayer Burgundies from the 1980s. Wonderful to drink now but will improve for decades." I scored it 98 points at dinner.

Equally impressive was the price of the food. Most of the plates are from \$8 to \$15. And we weren't charged corkage. (Call and ask if you can bring your own because the wine list is tiny.)

I am definitely going back next time I am in town. For Los Angeles, the more bling bling on the plate and in the glass, instead of everywhere else, the better.

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