



FOOD & DRINK

bites

THE DISH

ON THE ROCKS

A top Valley chef is back and making fresh foodie waves in Red Rock Country with a new fall menu that's all about stimulating the senses and cooking with purpose. Executive chef Michael O'Dowd (formerly of Kai at Sheraton Grand at Wild Horse Pass) took over the epicurean reigns at L'Auberge de Sedona in January, spending a good portion of this year overhauling the culinary concepts at both of its creekside restaurants. Drawing upon Sedona's regional roots, the coursed menu at **Cress on Oak Creek** highlights native ingredients like cholla buds, wheat berries and saguaro blossom—locally foraged and handselected by O'Dowd and his expert staff. With a penchant for blending Southwestern flavors and international technique, O'Dowd's signature style shines bright in dishes inspired by four natural elements: Earth, Wind, Water and Fire. *Tasting menus from \$90 per person, 301 L'Auberge Lane, 928.282.1661, lauberge.com/cress*
—Katarina Kovacevic

"The design of each dish is whimsical and overall like a Basquiat painting," he says. "My influences are life, art, culture and whatever I've seen or experienced along my journey. The aroma of wood planks on an old barn after a rainfall might remind me of truffles for a dish, for example."

"Each ingredient and plate set has a purpose and is woven harmoniously with each other," says O'Dowd. "It's about sourcing and harvesting in the surrounding area while accenting global ingredients."

A Celebration of Heirloom Tomatoes. Pickled Strawberries & Beets salad (pictured) is a layered take on O'Dowd's Earth theme, featuring a spiced pecan "soil" topped with the vegetables, plus goat cheese and mascarpone, microgreens, aged balsamic caviar and Queen Creek extra-virgin olive oil.

Outside the kitchen, O'Dowd's passions—race car driving and fly-fishing—are a true metaphor for his culinary approach... daring and diligent. A mashup of sweet, salty and savory, this salad is varied in flavor and texture, its dozen or so ingredients brought together in O'Dowd's modernist gastronomic style.

SHIPS AHOY

TIKI TIME For **UnderTow** co-owner Jason Asher, one of the more demanding aspects of his job is dreaming up ever-more inventive tiki cocktail recipes. Yet as his clipper ship-themed bar sails into its one-year anniversary, those dramatic drinks keep on coming, presented now in a spiffy hardbound menu splashing down with 38 cocktails. Twenty-five of those quaffs are new. Consider the Spoils of War (\$40), presented in a big carved coconut bowl with its island-inspired blend of single-barrel aged Puerto Rican rum, vanilla-infused Kentucky bourbon, cream of coconut, grapefruit, pineapple and lemon served over crushed ice under a flurry of toasted coconut and brilliant orchid flowers. Unless ye be particularly thirsty, this is ample enough to serve four. "In its countless voyages, the UnderTow has encountered many pirates looking to comprise its mission to capture goods such as liquor, tea, tobacco, spices and ammunition," Asher jests. "Captain and crew often stood with cannons and swords, and the UnderTow prevailed, represented so well with this tropical-tobacco-spiced cocktail." The crew also kicked up the nautical special effects for the wood-planked subterranean bar, including digital TV portholes that make it seem like the "ship" is sailing across an open ocean. UnderTow is now afloat daily and tempts with a new weekday happy hour from 4 to 6PM. 3620 E. Indian School Road, 602.753.6504, undertowphx.com —Carrey Sweet



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