

Flavor: Trial by Fire

By Carla Waldemar

When you go out for dinner, how often do you say, "I'll have the chicken"? Me neither. Chicken is what I cook at home on desperation days or pluck, pre-roasted, from the supermarket.

At FireLake, in the Downtown Radisson Hotel, it's a different story. Chef Paul Lynch, who possesses the Stradivarius of palates, lays to rest that rubber-banquet image, one bird at a time. A taste, and there's no going back; you're spoiled for life.

Like a Zen mantra, Lynch chants, "Seasonal, regional, organic," boycotting those botoxed Alabama hens. True to FireLake's name, he grabs the chick from the Land of 10,000 Lakes, massages it with spices, then grills it over a hot, flavor-forward rotisserie fire. In fact, he roasts a batch every two hours, so diners are never stuck with the rubbery bird of banquet lore. Instead, the skin is crisp yet yielding, dressing meat that's moist and rich with flavor, the way grandma's farmyard flock used to taste. In fact, Paul is grandma's biggest fan: "The DNA of the restaurant represents Minnesota food we all grew up with," but subtly refined — or, as he puts it, "flavor-engineered." (That's simply chef-speak for the spice rub.)



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