

 **Saturday** - Hi/Low: 72/54
Mostly sunny

 **Sunday** - Hi/Low: 76/53
Sunny

 **Monday** - Hi/Low: 74/51
Mostly sunny

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The Biz Buzz

Get the most up-to-date news, insights and analysis of South Sound business.

Friday, May 23rd, 2008

Upscale cuisine at a convention center? Yes. Oh, yes.

Posted by **C.R. Roberts** @ 08:05:51 am



The steak was tender, the beets amazing and that watermelon gazpacho was other-wordly.

A handful of staff members who serve conventions and galas at the Greater Tacoma Convention & Trade Center had a "Chef's Roundtable Tasting" yesterday – sampling the early wares of new executive chef Allan Wambaa.

Born in Kenya, Wambaa (that's him, above) learned his profession in Africa and later served as chef in the kitchens of Saudi Arabia's Prince Fahd bin Khalid Al-Saud. He worked in several Seattle kitchens – most recently at Bell Harbor – and a few weeks ago took over the Aramark position of executive chef at the GTC&TC.

As we ate yesterday (I was there for professional reasons, of course, and I will be sending a check in recompense), I spoke with Monique Nadeau, the center's catering sales manager. She explained that the quality of the food is becoming more important to those who rent space.

"I think it's highly important," she said. "We have some people – there is this cliché of the convention center rubber chicken. Otis (Huemmer, former executive chef) set the bar high for us. These groups are coming back. They want something different every time."

Prospective clients can choose from a 32-page menu of GTC&TC offerings, but some choose to let the chef use his creativity and imagination.

They couldn't do much better than choose yesterday's menu:

- Amuse Bouche:* Cucumber and asparagus gelee with creme fraiche and chive.
- Salad:* Goat cheese and beet Napoleon with citrus, shallot and hazelnut vinaigrette.
- Intermezzo:* Watermelon gazpacho.
- Entree:* (pictured above) Duet of port wine poached filet mignon and blue-nose sea bass; pommes Robuchon, Parisian vegetables, Shiraz reduction.
- Dessert:* Tropical fruit roulade with passion fruit and mint coulis.

If you're planning a gala soon, go for the gazpacho especially. And the Napoleon. And that coulis. Or the filet.

I'm still full.

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THE BIZ BUZZ



The News Tribune Business Team will keep you updated on what's happening in the South Sound and beyond. Check here for news about economic development, aerospace, shopping and much more.

Talk to us

Got something to say? **Here's the place to say it.** We welcome your comments on what's going on in business in the South Sound that we should be discussing, reporting or analyzing here on our blog or in the pages of The News Tribune.

Contributors

Marce Edwards is the business editor. She has been at The News Tribune for seven years and has written about technology and big businesses in the South Sound including Weyerhaeuser and Russell. Before moving to Tacoma, she worked at The Idaho Statesman in Boise. She is a Northwest native who likes to garden and refuses to use an umbrella. She lives in Tacoma with her husband and two kids.

C.R. Roberts is a Tacoma native. Before joining The News Tribune, he worked as a freelance writer and part-time cowhand on a cattle ranch in Northern Idaho. He writes about small business, personal finance and other business issues.

John Gillie writes about the aerospace and airline industries, commercial development and consumer issues. During his 30-year-tenure at The News Tribune he has covered issues as diverse as the Native American fishing rights disputes, crime and the courts, the wood products industry and energy. He lived in Tacoma with his family for 25 years, but now lives in Kent because his wife heads a five-state non-profit foundation headquartered in Ballard, and it only seemed a sensible compromise to make considering their workplaces are 40 miles apart.

Kelly Kearsley has been a business reporter at The News Tribune since 2005. She covers the Port of Tacoma and international trade. Being born and raised in Spokane she's used to living in cities with inferiority complexes and, in fact, prefers it. Prior to working at The News Tribune, she spent three years as a reporter for The Bulletin in Bend, Oregon and another year working stints for The Associated Press and Seattle Times. She graduated from Pacific Lutheran University. She lives in Tacoma with her husband and miniature schnauzer.

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