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NORMAN’S at The Ritz-Carlton Orlando, Grande Lakes
Renowned Chef Norman Van Aken Breaks New Ground with New World Cuisine

Orlando, FL – Internationally acclaimed chef Norman Van Aken launched NORMAN’S, at Ritz-Carlton Orlando, Grande Lakes, in July 2003. This unprecedented project marks milestones in many respects, including: the first time The Ritz-Carlton has collaborated with an independent celebrity chef-restaurateur, and the first time Van Aken has taken the award-winning New World cuisine of NORMAN’S beyond his flagship restaurant in Miami.

Van Aken’s New World cuisine, which incorporates the ingredients and traditions of Latin America, the Caribbean, southern United States, and Asia, is the culinary centerpiece of The Ritz-Carlton Orlando, Grande Lakes’ diverse dining experiences. For NORMAN’S Orlando, Van Aken features a selection of his signature dishes—which have won him a loyal following in Miami and world-wide acclaim in his best-selling cookbooks. He also features new, innovative dishes that highlight the local produce and flavors of Orlando. Working with Van Aken is chef de cuisine Clayton Miller, who earned his stripes at Daniel, the French Laundry, and other Ritz-Carlton properties.

The menu is a three-course prix fixe with appetizers including *Creamy Cracked Conch Chowder with Saffron, Toasted Coconut, Oranges and a “Cloud”* and *My Down Island French Toast with Curaçao Scented Foie Gras, Griddled Brioche, Passion Fruit Caramel and Gingery Candied Lime Zest*. Main courses include *Roasted Pork “Havana” with “21st Century Mole,” Stone Ground Haitian Grits, Sweet Corn-Black Bean Salsa and a Spanish Sherry Wine Reduction* and *“Mongolian” Barbequed Marinated and Grilled Veal Chop with Chinese Eggplant and Thai Fried Rice*. To finish the meal, NORMAN’S offers multiculturally-inspired sweets like *Key Lime Natilla en Tortilla with Cayenne, Cilantro Sirop, and a Tropical Fruit Salsa* and *Toasted Pecan Caramel Tart with Jamaican Blue Mountain Coffee Bean Crema*. In addition, Van Aken designs a five-course tasting menu of new dishes that change monthly.

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NORMAN'S offers a dynamic wine selection that was especially chosen to match the diverse flavors of Van Aken's signature cuisine. Overseen by sommelier Matthew Neel, the wine list is organized according to flavor and stylistic categories, including a wide array of grape varietals from around the globe. Underscoring NORMAN'S commitment to excellence for food and wine, the restaurant offers premium service and hospitality, under the guidance of partner Carl Bruggemeier and managing director Tony Masiello—further raising the bar for fine dining in Orlando.

NORMAN'S, located at The Ritz-Carlton Orlando, Grande Lakes, sits amidst 500-acres of lush natural gardens, abundant lakes and elegantly landscaped grounds. Existing as a stand-alone building adjacent to the 584-room Ritz-Carlton, NORMAN'S has an independent grand entrance, as well as entry via a breezeway from the hotel. Wrought-iron gates lead into the restaurant's mahogany cocktail salon, which serves Van Aken's signature drinks and a menu for lighter fare.

Appointed with hand-carved mahogany seats, leather chairs and chartreuse silk-covered settees, the salon is framed by a second set of wrought iron gates that draw guests into NORMAN'S stunning octagonal dining room, which boasts a 35-foot ceiling and soaring windows.

The 130-seat space is imbued with a palette of warm browns, yellows, and other earth tones. Design elements include silk and leather banquettes in black, rust, and the color of café au lait; chairs upholstered in Dijon-toned suede; hand-sculpted iron chandeliers with hand-blown Venetian glass shades; and terrazzo marble latticed floors. The focal point of the room is a dramatic 1200-bottle wine vault that houses a semi-private chef's table for up to 14 guests. A stunning show kitchen with two wood burning ovens on one end of the room allows diners to see NORMAN'S dedicated kitchen crew in action. NORMAN'S also offers private dining facilities for up to 30 guests. The dining room is surrounded by a long, wrap-around terrace that provides outdoor seating for up to 60. Glass-topped, wrought-iron tables are paired with linen-cushioned chairs in dark brown and ecru, giving guests a magnificent view of the property's Greg Norman-designed golf course and the verdant forests beyond.

Norman's is open for dinner seven nights a week from 6 pm to 10 pm, with cocktail salon service from 4 pm until midnight.

Chef Van Aken is a 2003 inductee into the James Beard Foundation's "Who's Who of Food & Beverage in America" and has been recognized by the James Beard Foundation as the "Best Chef in the Southeast." He has received a wealth of accolades including the Robert Mondavi Culinary Award of Excellence, and the *Food Arts* Silver Spoon Lifetime Achievement Award. His acclaimed signature restaurant, *Norman's*, in Coral Gables, has been honored as one of "America's Top Tables" for four consecutive years by *Gourmet Magazine*, and has earned the title of "Best Restaurant in South Florida" from the *New York Times* and "Best Restaurant in Miami" from *Food & Wine Magazine*.

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