

JANUARY 2008

IDEAS FOR FULL-SERVICE RESTAURANTS

# RESTAURANT HOSPITALITY



## Rising Stars Jamie Lauren

**I**t's not always easy for a chef to get noticed in a highly regarded watering hole, much less one named for a legendary spirit that was banned in 1912 for its alleged hallucinogenic effects. But 30-year-old

**Jamie Lauren** has made customers and the media take notice of her work at Absinthe Brasserie & Bar, a San Francisco haunt whose bartenders are ranked among the city's best.

But don't let her baby face fool you. Lauren is a 124-proof talent (the firepower of Absinthe), and her nose ring and tattoos suggest she's as free a spirit as Picasso, Oscar Wilde and Johnny Depp, three characters who all favored a drink or two of the "green fairy" on occasion. Though her spirit soars, Lauren's feet are firmly planted in the fertile soil that gives rise to her American-influenced French and Northern Italian cuisine.

Her food is hearty and grounded: Consider entrees such as pork confit with braised red cabbage, serrano ham and crispy mustard spaetzle or pan-seared arctic char with creamed corn, braised ham hock and purple potatoes. It's serious food that belies her age.

Lauren grew up in New York City and knows what it's like to eat well. It inspired her to graduate with honors from the CIA and then cook with Anita Lo at Annisa in N.Y.C. But her influences stretch to France where she rubbed elbows with Michael Bouvier at L'Essential and back to San Francisco where she manned a stove with Lance Dean Velasquez at Home.

The *San Francisco Chronicle* named Lauren a Rising Star two years back for her work at Levende Lounge, where she prepared a menu of small plates. Now, at Absinthe, she has raised the bar. The *Chronicle* praised her, saying she has taken the restaurant's "competent" food to another level with her clean, eclectic flavors. There's nothing trippy about that. —Michael Sanson

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