

# Save The Best For Last!



ratpacker8@aol.com

# W

here oh where to begin? Well, I'll save the best for last...that'll keep you reading. Hope you've been well and that you are making your dreams come true in 2005. Sometimes all the things I do are so much fun that they seem like a dream, but as far as I can discern, I'm awake and delivering this report on just a few of the rapacious moments I've savored during the past months.

As you know, the lovely DAME EDNA conquered Broadway once again, and the lady (ahem) and I celebrated with a Gondola ride in Central Park. ( Her limo was in the shop, and she must travel in style).

I had a couple of holiday reunions with a two of my favorite chefs. My Food Network colleague, EMERIL LAGASSE, who appears to be conquering most of the free world with his TV work, products, restaurants and personal appearances, and DANIEL BOULUD, who's headed for a TV deal as I write this.

One of the most interesting Sundays I enjoyed recently was a tour of Berlin, Germany, with BERNARD LACKNER, the GM of New York's Plaza Athenee Hotel, and the ageless and charming GEORGE HAMILTON, with whom I had worked on Saturday night when I hosted the 2004 STAR DIAMOND AWARD at the ADLON hotel.

As you know, I take a little music now and then with my food and wine. Had a wonderful meal at the Cafe Carlyle with the hotel's GM, JAMES MCBRIDE followed by a truly mesmerizing performance by BOBBY SHORT and his orchestra. Don't miss BOBBY SHORT in his (sad to say) final season at the Carlyle. Also, make a reservation to see MICHAEL FINSTEIN at his self-named club in the Regency. Michael is one of the best popular standards singers in the world and he knows more about a song than a Google search. The fast-rising singer, piano player and composer PETER CINCOTTI and his family were ringside for the show.

A quick aside before I get mushy and romantic with my best-is-yet-to-come close-stop by the terrific CIRCO RESTAURANT on west 55th street for some Gelatto that will give you the flavor of Italy way faster than a six-hour IL Italia flight.

OK, drumroll, "I'm in a spin, and lovin' the spin I'm in, under that old black magic called love." I'm engaged to the beautiful CAROL CAMPBELL, and boy have we been having some fun!

TONY MAY, from Central Park South's beautiful SAN DOMENICO Restaurant, invited us on a whirlwind culinary tour of the Veneto region of Italy. Carol and I were with Tony's organization, GRUPPO RISTORATORI ITALIANI, and the journey was an endurance test of debauchery that found us eating and drinking at a frenzied pace. In Venice we broke away from the group for a little handholding at the internationally renown HARRY'S BAR, where we had the distinct pleasure of meeting the man behind all those terrific Cipriani operations, HARRY CIPRIANI. He poured enough Proccesso to divert us from shopping, but hey, the Euro is too high anyway.

Last but not least, before Carol and I embarked on a sixteen day CRYSTAL CRUISE from Dover to New York, we stayed at London's extraordinary BERKELEY Hotel where we enjoyed the "Pret-A Porte," the concept features Laurent Perrier Champagne, and cookies and cakes inspired by the designs of Giorgio Armani, Diane von Furstenburg, Louis Vuitton and other fashion superstars from nearby Sloane Street.

About the cruise? Next time. BT



Bill with Dame Edna enjoying a gondola ride in Central Park