

Wine Spectator

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the New Sonoma

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Where to Eat



Chef Douglas Keane of Cyrus has become well-known for his flavorful dishes, some of which integrate elements of Asian cuisine and American comfort food.

Top Restaurants

Cyrus

29 North St., Healdsburg Telephone (707) 433-3311 Web site www.cyrusrestaurant.com Open Dinner, daily Cost Prix-fixe menus \$68–\$110

Corkage \$35 Best of Award of Excellence



If you're looking for the Sonoma County translation of the French Laundry, you could hardly do better than Cyrus. But Cyrus is also very much its own place—partners Nick Peyton and Douglas Keane have created an extravagant food-and-wine experience, but one that keeps with Sonoma's less buttoned-down lifestyle. Whispering over your food is not required, and the dining room, with its textured yellow walls, arched pillars and vaulted ceiling, is at once dramatic and warmly inviting.

Peyton has overseen the dining rooms of top San Francisco restaurants such as Masa's, the Dining Room at the Ritz-Carlton and Restaurant Gary Danko, and it shows. The service is crisp and intuitive, charming but never intrusive. Guests are greeted with Cyrus' trademark Champagne and caviar cart, a little showmanship that's hard for patrons to resist. The wine list has more than 700 offerings, and it's a worldly selection, expensive but full of gems such as Clos des Pape Châteauneuf-du-Pape 2003 (\$200) and Chasseur Chardonnay Russian River Valley Lorenzo 2004 (\$105). There's an extensive offering of half-bottles, well-suited for a leisurely paced evening, and perceptively selected wine pairings by the course.

The menu is prix-fixe but loosely organized. There are nine categories, ranging from soup to foie gras to fish to cheese to dessert, and guests can choose a three-, four- or five-course meal. There's also a seven-course chef's tasting menu. Chef Keane's dishes are rich and intensely flavored yet understated and graceful in their integration, even when he adds elements of Asian cuisine and American comfort food. The creamy billi-bi was intensely flavored, while the Thai-style marinated lobster with avocado, mango and hearts of palm was a succulent dance of disparate flavors and textures. If you want to experience a taste of Cyrus without paying full price, each course is available à la carte at the bar—just arrive early to get a seat.