THOMAS BELLEC

Executive Chef

“Changes to the menu are an important way for me to showcase who I am. As long as I’m connecting to the community and keeping up on culinary trends, I can be adventurous.”

About:

Four Seasons Tenure

- Since 1999
- First Four Seasons Assignment: Chef de Cuisine, Four Seasons Hotel Toronto

Employment History

- Four Seasons Hotel Toronto; Four Seasons Hotel Boston; Four Seasons Resorts Lana'i; Four Seasons Resort Carmelo, Uruguay; Four Seasons Hotel Toronto; The Inn At Manitou, McKellar, Ontario; Hotel Des Neiges, Courchevel, Savoie, France; Little Dix Bay, Virgin Gorda, BVI; Le Galion, Concarneau, Finistère, France

Birthplace

- Concarneau, Brittany, France

Education

- Baccalauréat Professional, St-Marc Culinary School, Trègunc, France; Brevet de Technicien Supérieur, Sainte-Anne Culinary Institute, St-Nazaire, France

“A long line of incredible chefs preceded me here in the kitchen, so I had plenty of inspiration for creating a menu of my own.” That’s Thomas Bellec on taking the reins as Executive Chef of Beverly Wilshire, Beverly Hills (A Four Seasons Hotel). Arriving from Toronto in June 2014, Bellec immediately set about re-envisioning the Hotel’s dining experiences, starting with a fresh take on Mediterranean cuisine for lunch and dinner at THE Blvd. No surprise, he relished the opportunity: “This is a very busy Hotel, one of the biggest in the company, but they gave me carte blanche to do whatever I want – as long as it’s perfect.”

The City of Angels is a long way from The City That Works, of course – and not merely as the airplane flies. “Every ingredient I use here was raised within 10 miles of the Hotel,” Bellec continues, recalling the challenges posed by short growing seasons during his previous run at Four Seasons Hotel Toronto. “There I was transforming ingredients. Here what we get is so beautiful and sun-soaked, I can practically put it raw on the plate.”

Bellec is mindful of his clientele’s desire for a “once-in-a-lifetime experience” at the table, even if, like many, they’re from the neighborhood and dine frequently at THE Blvd or by the pool. “Like many Four Seasons hotels, we have a dedicated following. I see them coming and going. It’s my job to make sure we deliver what they expect on the spot.” Celebrities, royalty, corporate hotshots or just plain folks: “If they’ve come to be pampered, this is the right spot.”

Whomever the customer, Bellec finds it best to simply go with what he knows: “I try not to focus too much on trends. I look first at where I am and what’s available seasonally, then at what I like to cook and how I like to cook it.” Among the dazzling results are new dishes such as long-stemmed California strawberries
in aged balsamic gazpacho and cucumber jelly, lip-smacking bouillabaisse with Santa Barbara spotted prawns, and amberjack carpaccio with tagliolini pasta and caviar.

Raised in coastal Concarneau in Brittany, France, Bellec was inspired to cook by his grandparents, who ran a renowned bakery in Brittany. His desire to go professional was his own, however: “I always wanted to play with food and please people” – a recipe for restaurant success if ever there was one. Trained in the classical tradition at a Michelin one-star in his hometown, he worked at a few addresses before joining Four Seasons as Chef de Cuisine in Toronto. He made four more stops with the company en route to Beverly Hills, including Carmelo, Lana’i, Boston, and Toronto again.

In 2015, Chef Bellec was deeply honored to be named a Master Chef of France by Maitres Cuisiniers de France.

As throughout his Four Seasons career, Bellec believes strongly in coaching his kitchen staff and guiding “green talent” to gold for Four Seasons. Indeed, he is training his Sous Chef to be “the next” Executive Chef for the company. “Guiding and coaching are things I really enjoy, and it’s very rewarding to do what someone did for me,” he says, recalling the training he received from Michelin-starred Chef Henri Gaonac’h at Le Galion in Concarneau. “He was very strict and it was not always pleasant, but I realize now that it’s on you to make things pleasant or not. Every time I go back home, I thank Chef Henri.”

Meanwhile, every time he gets off work in LA, Bellec thanks his lucky stars that he is not needed in the kitchen. “My wife is an excellent cook,” he says.