

Spa cuisine makes industry debut with health-conscious splurge

by *Monica Zimmer*

Delta will be the first airline to serve onboard spa cuisine – a response to customers' requests for lighter, more healthful food – beginning Nov. 8 in transatlantic first and business class.

“Spa cuisine lets travelers splurge while remaining health-conscious,” said Lorraine Skalko, planner-Menu Development. “Spa vacations are very popular with our customers, who told us through a survey they want healthful but good-tasting



Delta will serve *cuisine minceur* inspired by Executive Chef Peter Brüderli of the VICTORIA-JUNFRAU Grand Hotel & Spa. Delta caterers observe a demonstration in Switzerland.

food options. Spa cuisine provides the winning combination.”

The survey results are supported by statistics from *Condé Nast Traveler* magazine indicating that spa visits by U.S. vacationers are up 233 percent since 1987, she said.

Cut fat, not taste

Delta consulted spa chefs from seven top health resorts who are masters at cutting fat content without sacrificing taste. After several months of planning, cooking, and tasting, the spa chefs developed tasty morsels such as corn soup from the Phoenician spa in Arizona; sautéed mahi mahi with vegetable ragout from the Grand Wailea in Hawaii; gazpacho with seared scallops from the Ihilani, also in Hawaii; and orange-yam mousse with blueberry coulis from the Golden Door in California.

Chefs at Switzerland's VICTORIA-JUNGFRAU Grand Hotel & Spa designed the spa menu for flights departing from Europe.

“The Swiss spa's trademark is *cuisine minceur*—light, small portions that emphasize moderation, not deprivation,” said Hannelore Perez, manager, In-Flight Dining, Europe/

Asia. “We adapted this special cuisine to our airline requirements to serve fabulous, four-course dinners at fewer than 900 calories.” Caterers will broil, bake, poach, steam, or roast—but never fry—the food items.

Altitude challenge

Caterers from Cincinnati, New York, and Atlanta participated in an October workshop in the Atlanta test kitchen. Daniel Malzhan, executive chef-Test Kitchen, adapted the spa recipes to withstand the airline environment. Food must reheat well, meet height requirements for storage, and please the palate—which changes at high altitudes. The spa chefs reviewed and approved the process at the catering workshop.

A similar workshop in Switzerland late last month introduced Delta's European caterers and chefs to spa cuisine. Chefs from VICTORIA-JUNGFRAU Grand Hotel & Spa prepared every item on the spa cuisine menu. Caterers responded



Photo by Charles Burcher

Delta introduces light, healthful spa cuisine on transatlantic flights Nov. 8. Here, four-course fare from the Ihilani spa in Hawaii features seared scallop gazpacho, salad, hosing BBQ chicken salad, and raspberry-mango poached pears.

enthusiastically to the creative quality and good taste. According to Perez, several chefs told her that preparing spa cuisine rekindled their culinary passions.

“Spa cuisine is so exquisite that passengers may not believe it's good for you,” said Perez. “I won't be surprised if some say, ‘You brought me the wrong plate.’”

Flight attendants are sampling spa cuisine at lounge “blitzes” scheduled in Atlanta, Cincinnati, and New York Nov. 2-8.

In-Flight Service will monitor the response to spa cuisine, providing customers with an e-mail address to comment during a 30-day test. Flight attendants will give feedback via the FACTS system, in the “Food” category under “Express Classics Spa Cuisine.”