

**VINTAGE NAPA VALLEY: AUBERGE DU SOLEIL CELEBRATES
20 YEARS OF ELEGANT HOSPITALITY AND UNVEILS A STYLISH
NEW RENOVATION**

RUTHERFORD, CALIF. (April 15, 2005) – Twenty years ago this spring, Auberge du Soleil, one of Northern California’s most revered dining establishments, opened the doors of its inn, a handful of *maisons* scattered across a 33-acre hillside olive grove in Napa Valley. This month, the acclaimed “Inn of the Sun” begins a new chapter in its history, as it unveils a sophisticated renovation, welcomes a new chef and offers new amenities created to elevate the art of relaxation for which the Auberge has become renowned.

“Auberge du Soleil brought a new style of informal elegance, luxury and service to the world of hospitality 20 years ago,” said George Goeggel, Managing Partner. “For many, it embodies the perfect retreat, and we’ve been pleased to see how many guests have returned again and again throughout the years. Few hotels age gracefully. At 20, the Auberge is better than ever.”

The inn completed the dream of noted San Francisco restaurateur Claude Rouas, who envisioned a tribute to his beloved Provence in the California wine country. Rouas is attributed with bringing a renaissance to Napa Valley when he opened the Auberge du Soleil Restaurant in 1981. It was an instant sensation, attracting discerning diners from Northern California and beyond with its airy, elegant Mediterranean style and French-influenced, locally sourced cuisine.

In 1985, Rouas and business partner Robert Harmon opened the inn. As with the restaurant, the *maisons* – or cottages – were the work of influential designer Michael Taylor, who infused his “California Style” of overscaled furniture, dramatic fabrics and sculptural accessories with the essence of Provence. The suites enchanted guests with their elegantly rustic furnishings, handmade tile floors, abstract paintings, beds dressed in bright fuschia and gold and French doors leading to private terraces and sweeping views of the valley below.

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The inn opened to immediate acclaim. Critics called it “Casa Vogue;” “the kind of hotel so often found in Europe – secluded, discreet and elegant – and with wonderful food;” and “a masterpiece of design.” Since then, Auberge du Soleil has repeatedly received some of the highest accolades from the hospitality industry, discriminating guests and the media. In 1988, the inn joined Relais & Châteaux, the most prestigious collection of small luxury hotels and restaurants in the world.

Today, 20 years later, the Auberge dazzles again with a fresh, updated look that pays tribute to Michael Taylor’s original vision. It is the work of San Francisco designer Suzanne Tucker, of renowned interior design firm Tucker & Marks, who was Taylor’s assistant on the original Auberge. In her renovation, she was loyal to her mentor, going straight for the bold and designing luxuriously overscale furniture, richly covered bedcovers and heavy limestone countertops.

Tucker designed custom furniture with a historic basis for the rooms. Oversized braided rope lounges and ottomans were inspired by 1940s pieces at a hotel in Juan les Pins. Cream matelasse bedcovers are accented with stunning persimmon coverlets and bolsters. Made in France, the fabric is a copy of a vintage Pierre Frey design that Taylor liked. Tucker had stashed a few yards years before and recently commissioned Frey’s Paris subsidiary Margueroy to custom-dye and weave the fabric exclusively for the Auberge. Cered hand-stained oak and wheat-colored limestone replaces the tile-covered countertops for a rich finish. The result is a bright, warm look that’s updated, yet bold in Taylor’s fashion and reminiscent of a secluded Côte d’Azur retreat.

No 21st Century renovation would be complete without a few high-tech touches. All suites at the Auberge now feature plasma televisions in both sitting areas and bedrooms. Bathrooms in all rooms and suites feature 15-inch flat screen televisions for viewing from the extra-large soaking tubs. DVD players and wireless Internet access are also standard in all guestrooms.

In the **Restaurant at Auberge du Soleil**, new Executive Chef Robert Curry welcomes guests with beautifully prepared Wine Country cuisine. Curry has brought his own fan base to the Auberge, having spent six years as Executive Chef at nearby Domaine Chandon. Most recently, he was Executive Chef across the valley at the Wine

Spectator Greystone Restaurant at the Culinary Institute of America. A native of Los Angeles, Curry began his career working with

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Wolfgang Puck at Ma Cuisine and later, with Michel Richard and Alain Giraud at Citrus. After traveling the world and training with Alain Ducasse, Michel Rostang and other renowned chefs, he was lured to Napa Valley, where he has established a reputation as one of Wine Country's finest.

Renovated recently by Tucker, the Restaurant at Auberge du Soleil features rich interiors accented with abstract paintings, exposed beams and warm wood furnishings. Tables on the famous terrace are some of the most sought-after in the Valley, due to the panoramic views of the olive groves, vineyards and sunsets. The adjacent bar, now updated with in a relaxed contemporary style, is an inviting setting in which to sip a cocktail by the fire, dine on lighter fare *al fresco* or enjoy one of the 35 wines served by the glass.

After a meal in the dining room or overlooking the valley from the dramatic terrace, guests are invited to feed their aesthetic soul by viewing the many works of art on display throughout the grounds. The inn's new I. Wolk Gallery features a carefully curated selection of contemporary paintings, works on paper and small-scale sculptures. The gallery also serves as a gateway to the Auberge's existing collection of more than 100 outdoor sculptures. So integral are the visual arts to the Auberge du Soleil experience that the inn has introduced a new art amenity. Easels, paints and brushes, pencils and pastels are now available at no charge for *plein air* painting and drawing in the magical setting of lush gardens and olive groves.

Spa du Soleil, the Auberge's hillside spa, recently unveiled the *Melisse Suite*, a spacious spa suite for romantic pairs or four friends, featuring a fireplace, private tanning deck and heated private pool. Guests can relax in total privacy as they gaze through floor-to-ceiling windows at the panoramic view of Napa Valley and sip a pre-treatment elixir. After enjoying side-by-side treatments, they can soak in a heated private pool overlooking the Valley. Many of the preparations used in the spa treatments feature

house-infused oils, as well as calendula, rosemary, lemon balm and other herbs cultivated by the therapists in the spa's new garden.

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Auberge du Soleil is the flagship property of **Auberge Resorts**, a collection of exceptional hotels, resorts and private clubs, each with a unique personality that assures a memorable guest experience. Among the distinctive properties are Esperanza, The Lodge at CordeValle, Calistoga Ranch and the new Inn at Palmetto Bluff, with several others currently in development. While Auberge Resorts nurtures the individuality of each establishment, all are characterized by a set of communal elements: intimate, understated elegance; magnificent natural settings; inspired cuisine utilizing the very best regional ingredients; and gracious yet unobtrusive service. For more information about Auberge Resorts, please visit www.aubergeresorts.com.

Auberge du Soleil is also a member of **Relais & Châteaux**, the prestigious global hospitality association of intimate, elegant and independently owned hotels and acclaimed restaurants. Founded in 1954 in France, the association is comprised of 469 luxurious establishments in 51 countries.

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