



**MARITIME  
LEISURE LIMITED**

News Release

25 February 2002

## **FOOD DESIGN ROLE FOR US CHEF ON MARITIME'S ISLAND PROJECT**

The Maritime Hotel Academy's consultancy work for newcomer Island Cruises - which launches a Mediterranean programme from Palma, Mallorca on March 26 - has been boosted by the appointment of a fast-rising American chef as food designer and culinary trainer.

Phillip Craig Thomason, 31, has joined the Academy project team in Salzburg, Austria, to spearhead menu development under a product design, recruitment and training contract with Island, the joint venture between UK tour operator First Choice and Royal Caribbean International.



*"A Selection of the creative dishes from Phillip Thomason"*

Thomason, an award-winning graduate of the Cordon Bleu School in Paris, has worked for US celebrity chefs George Mahaffey of the Little Nell Hotel in Aspen, Stars restaurants founder Jeremiah Tower and most recently Wolfgang Puck, whose restaurant and hospitality business includes catering for prestige events such as the Academy Awards and the Superbowl.

Thomason's knowledge of volume, quality catering complements the "Ad Lib" dining concept, with no set times or tables, devised for the 40,132 gt Island Escape, formerly Royal Caribbean's Viking Serenade. The three onboard restaurants include the a la carte Oasis, the 24-hour Beachcomber and the 600-seat Island offering a hot and cold buffet selection or full waiter service.

- more -

Member of the Maritime Leisure Group

- 2 -

With a brief ranging from light bites to haute cuisine, Thomason's menus will reflect worldwide influences as well as traditional favourites. "I am trying to create three unique experiences taking into account some very exotic ports of call and using fresh local produce as much as possible," he observes.

His restaurant dishes include starters such as lemongrass and ginger prawns; main courses like mandarin duck with wild rice pancakes, herb-crusting pork with pumpkin butter and swordfish with mango salsa; and desserts including bittersweet chocolate and Earl Grey tea parfait or summer berry tart with lemon curd and lavender shortbread.

"Producing inviting food on a large scale poses special challenges at sea in terms of storage space and particularly staffing. We'll have far fewer kitchen staff compared with a shoreside operation of similar size and quality - around 50 people producing up to 6,000 meals a day," says Thomason.

In the weeks before Island Escape enters service, he is overseeing chef training during the ship's trans-Atlantic positioning voyage and during refit in Portugal, followed by supervisory visits to ensure smooth implementation.

"I will be working with the executive chef to finalise menu development and kitchen organisation - everything from shift rotas to ingredient lists," says the Seattle-based specialist.

"We will be perfecting the balance between creating food which is easy and cost-effective to produce yet faithful to the idea. As TV chefs have proved, food has become a very popular art form which underlines the Academy's belief that cruise dining should be just as entertaining as the shows."

- ends -

Press enquiries:  
Paul Ellis  
Direct Public Relations, London  
Tel: +44 (0)20 8868 7648  
paul.ellis.directpr@ukf.net