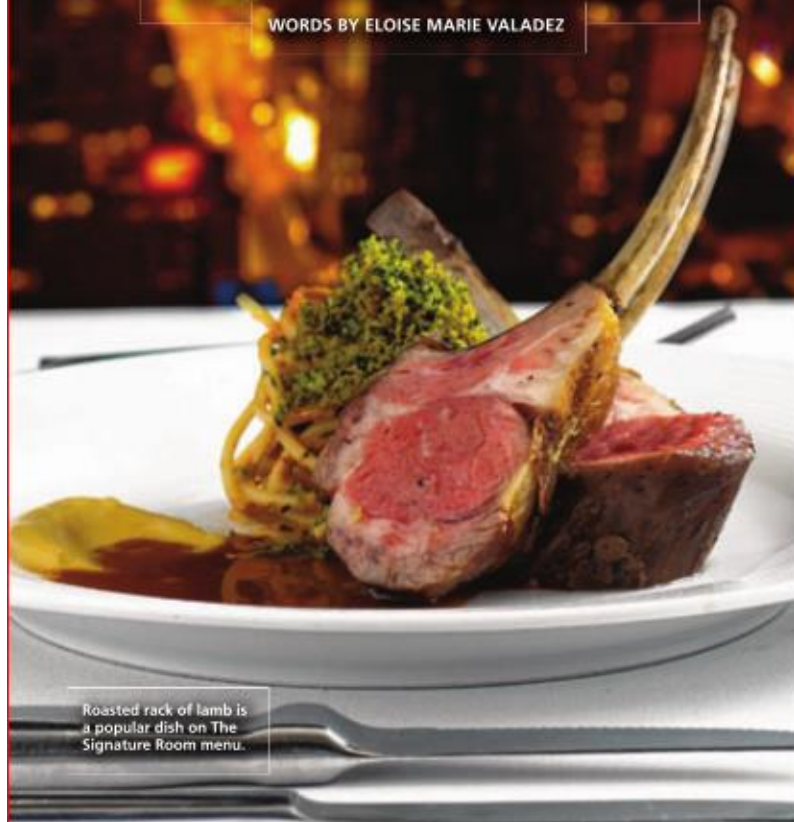


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FOOD FEATURE

# Culinary VISTA

THE SIGNATURE ROOM AT THE 95TH  
CELEBRATING TWO DECADES OF FINE  
CUISINE AND SPECTACULAR VIEWS

WORDS BY ELOISE MARIE VALADEZ



Roasted rack of lamb is a popular dish on The Signature Room menu.

A twentieth anniversary is always cause for celebration. When it's the twentieth anniversary of a premiere sky-high fine dining venue, the celebration tends to be of monumental scope.

"I'm ecstatic that we're celebrating our twentieth anniversary," says Angela Aspito, director of operations at The Signature Room at the 95th located at the John Hancock building, one of Chicago's architectural gems. "It's a huge deal for us and also for the industry."

Aspito says because eighty percent of restaurants fail within only a few years, it's an even greater accomplishment to be marking such a monumental anniversary.

The Signature Room at the 95th was established July 3, 1993 by Rick Roman and Nick Pynkis, former employees at The 95th, the restaurant which once occupied that same space atop the Hancock.

"The owners put their blood, sweat and tears into it," says Aspito, adding she heard stories of that first day of operation in 1993. "They had a third of the staff they were supposed to have, and they both had to stay until 3 a.m. to do the dishes."

According to Aspito, the owners' restaurant project was a real dream come true which came to be through much hard work and diligently pursuing a dream. "Rick and his wife bought a computer and put together a business plan by reading about starting a business from the *Book for Dummies*," she says, laughing.

The restaurant's name, Aspito says, was a type of play on words associated with the name of the building it's housed in.

"John Hancock was the first person to sign the Declaration of Independence," Aspito says, adding the owners thought The Signature Room would be an ideal moniker for their establishment.

In addition to The Signature Room at the 95th dining room, there is its accompanying The Signature Lounge at the 96th.

The former dining establishment that was atop the Hancock was French-inspired while The Signature Room at the 95th has evolved to be a restaurant focusing on high quality, contemporary American cuisine with global influences.

Aspito says the restaurant's executive chef Rosalia Barron, the first woman to man the kitchen at The Signature Room, is bringing years of experience and creativity to her position at the acclaimed establishment.

Dishes are created with seasonal and locally sourced ingredients. And quality, in terms of ingredients, service, and overall

management, is of utmost importance. Chef Barron, a native of Mexico City, previously worked with Chicago chefs Rick Bayless and Carrie Nahabedian. She's been at the helm of the restaurant since last October.

"She has a diverse background and gives us an opportunity to provide a new and exciting experience to diners," Aspito says.

Among items on Chef Barron's new menu are a duck trio appetizer, seared foie gras appetizer, entrees such as pan seared veal chop with smoked bread pudding, chorizo-stuffed pork chop with whipped potatoes, braised rabbit pot pie with truffles, spring vegetables and puff pastry, roasted rack of lamb, and slow roasted short ribs.

Other items starring at the restaurant include pancetta crusted seared scallops, seafood linguini, herb roasted chicken, Wagyu 'Manhattan' strip steak, spiced duck breast and grilled tofu.

The restaurant's wine cellar features a wide variety of international and domestic selections. Chef dinners featuring wine pairings are also held throughout the year.

About the dining philosophy in operation at the restaurant, Aspito says their vision statement lies in being a "world leader" in providing excellent food and a beautiful experience to all diners.

The owners also have established The Signature Room's Charity of the Month Program which has raised more than \$1 million for more than 220 nonprofits through the years.

In celebration of The Signature Room's twentieth anniversary, the following specials will be available through July:

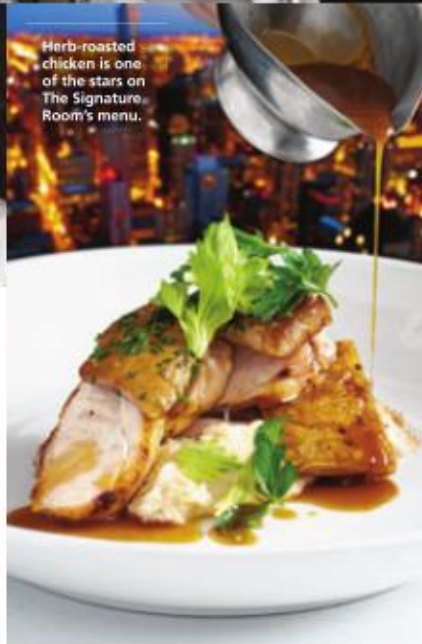
- Lunch buffet prices from 1993, available Thursdays through July 25. Cost for the Signature Lunch Buffet, running from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., on Thursdays only, will be \$6.95. (The lunch buffet is also available on Fridays and Saturday for \$20 for adults; \$11 for children 12 and younger).



The main dining room at The Signature Room at the 95th has a panoramic view of Chicago.



Rosalia Barron is the executive chef of The Signature Room at the 95th.



Herb-roasted chicken is one of the stars on The Signature Room's menu.

- Enter to win a 2013 wedding or anniversary celebration through June 30. A special micro-site will be offered for entry.
- Dinner entree specials July and specials promoted through Twitter and Facebook social media outlets will be available through July. For more information, visit [signatureroom.com](http://signatureroom.com)

The following recipe is from Chef Rosalia Barron.☛

## PORK MEDALLIONS WITH ROASTED GARLIC DEMI SAUCE

(SERVES 4 TO 6 PORTIONS)

- 4 heads of roasted garlic
- 4 pork tenderloins (about 10-ounces each)
- 4 slices of bacon
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 3 tablespoons butter
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 medium shallots (thinly sliced)
- 4 ounces white wine
- 6 ounces veal demi sauce (From grocery store)
- 2 sprigs of flat parsley, finely chopped.

Use a spoon to mash half of the garlic cloves. Reserve the remaining garlic. Lay two of the tenderloins down across the cutting board. Lay some plastic wrap across them and give them a light pounding with a meat tenderizer or the heel of your hand, to flatten tenderloins slightly on the fatter end. Remove and discard the plastic wrap.

Top the tenderloins with the mashed garlic, spreading the paste-like substance evenly, lay two slices of bacon, and wrap two tenderloins. Repeat process for the other two loins, creating an even shape tube. Using kitchen string, tie each double tenderloin together tightly and evenly at several points along the tube, that way it can be sliced into medallions without cutting strings.

Refrigerate for 12 hours. Preheat oven at 325 degrees. In a sauté pan, heat olive oil over high heat. Add one tablespoon of butter and once it's melted and light brown in color, season the pork generously with salt and black pepper. Cook the pork over high heat for about 4 minutes each side until evenly browned. Place the meat in a roasting pan and finish in the oven for about 20 minutes. Finished meat should be cooked through, but moist in the center, remove from the oven and allow to rest.

Discard the fat from the sauté pan and add one tablespoon of the butter. Heat to light brown add shallots, cook to translucent, deglaze with wine and reduce by half. Add demi sauce and drippings from the baking pan. Whisk in remaining butter into the sauce as well as the garlic and parsley.

**To serve:** Slice pork into medallions, arrange them around the platter, and spoon over the sauce.