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## **New Handcrafted Tables at Inn at Langley Restaurant Complement Exquisite Dining Experience**

LANGLEY, Wash. – Aug. 22, 2006 – The famous Chef’s Kitchen Restaurant at The Inn at Langley has a new setting for diners to enjoy Chef Matt Costello’s exquisite six-course dinners.

Guests of the romantically lit Chef’s Kitchen Restaurant now are seated at beautifully handcrafted tables designed and built by longtime Whidbey Island woodworker David Gray.

“Too often tables and other décor in a dining room are an afterthought. We think a meal’s setting – while not as important as the dinner itself – does play an integral role in the ritual of sharing great food,” says Costello, who wanted the restaurant to have simpler tables that would visually complement the food.

Costello first saw Gray’s work when he was catering an event on Whidbey Island. The award-winning chef was drawn to what he calls the almost Zen-like quality of Gray’s work, which features beautiful inlays that enhance a piece without overpowering it.

For Costello, finding Gray’s work was doubly serendipitous. Costello prefers to partner on projects with the owners of fellow island businesses. In Gray, he found a craftsman whose work he not only greatly admires, but whose small shop is located just over the hill from the Chef’s Kitchen Restaurant in Langley, a waterfront village on the south end of Whidbey Island.

“I’m guided by a community-based philosophy that emphasizes working to strengthen the entire island I call home,” says Costello. Partnering with other small, independent businesses on Whidbey is a key component of Costello’s credo. “It’s my way of making the local economy vibrant,” he adds. Costello strives to buy produce, meats and other foodstuffs from island farmers. In addition, he is working to connect these same farmers to other restaurateurs in the region.

Gray and his team of three craftsmen began working on the new tables 18 months ago. Gray chose to use cherry wood to build 10 tables with subtle ebony inlays. Such accents are a Gray trademark.

Gray, who estimates that it took 25 hours to build each table, says the table design was inspired by the Craftsman style of The Inn and the interiors of the intimate restaurant. “I was looking for something pretty simple but with some kind of signature on it,” says Gray, who calls the design outcome a mix of Craftsman and Mission.

“The tables do not stand out but add another level of interest to the dining experience,” says Costello. “They’re kind of like the frame for the creations that come from the kitchen. I have a reverence for food, and David has a reverence for wood. Working together, we have created a feast for not just the palate but for all the senses.”

Gray also crafted a new cutting board for Costello. Made of end-grain maple, the chopping board also has ebony inlays. Costello was thrilled with the result. It was, he noted, almost too handsome to use. “It was so hard to make that first cut on it,” says Costello, who was named a “Chef to Watch” by *Seattle Magazine* in 2003.

Costello and his staff work in an open display kitchen, where guests can see them prepare each course. He begins each evening by briefly giving an overview of the menu and talking about the origins of the meal’s ingredients. “Diners have a better appreciation of the dining experience if they know where the food comes from and how it’s prepared,” says Costello, who can now add to his presentation another story – the tale of the elegant tables at which his guests are seated.

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### **About The Inn at Langley and The Chef’s Kitchen Restaurant**

The Inn at Langley ([www.InnAtLangley.com](http://www.InnAtLangley.com)) is a 26-room contemporary inn on a Whidbey Island bluff overlooking Saratoga Passage in Washington state’s Puget Sound. Matt Costello is The Inn’s general manager and chef at The Inn’s Chef’s Kitchen Restaurant, the heart of The Inn. The restaurant overlooks a formal herb garden and features a double-sided, river-rock fireplace and an open display kitchen.

Chef Costello started in the restaurant business in 1989 at the renowned Four Seasons Olympic Hotel in Seattle. In 1994, he joined famous Seattle Chef Tom Douglas, heading up the kitchen as Chef at both the Dahlia Lounge and Palace Kitchen. While Chef of the Palace Kitchen in 1996, the restaurant was nominated for the James Beard Award for Best New Restaurant in the nation. *Seattle Magazine* named Costello Best Chef in Seattle in 1998. Under Costello’s direction, Dahlia Lounge was named *Seattle Weekly’s* 2001 Best Restaurant in the City. In 2003, *Seattle Magazine* named Costello “Chef to Watch.” The *ZAGAT Restaurant Guide* awarded The Chef’s Kitchen Restaurant an Extraordinary Rating in 2004, 2005 and 2006.

Dinner at The Chef’s Kitchen Restaurant is served every Friday, Saturday and Sunday throughout the year, and on Thursday evenings from mid-June through August. The price per person is \$80, not including wine, tax or gratuity. Dinner is open to Inn at Langley guests and the general public. Reservations are required and can be made by telephoning (360) 221-3033.

Seattle-based Columbia Hospitality manages and operates The Inn at Langley, which is owned by Paul and Pam Schell.

### **About David Gray Woodworking**

David Gray leads David Gray Furnituremakers Inc. Gray has been building furniture since 1978. He is a founding member of Northwest Fine Woodworking and has served on its board as president for more than half of its 25-year history. His work is on display in Northwest Fine Woodworking's showroom in Seattle's Pioneer Square. His work can also be found at Island Design in Langley, Wash.; The Wood Merchant in La Conner, Wash.; Artwood in Bellingham, Wash.; and The Real Mother Goose in Portland, Ore. More information about Gray and his company can be found at [www.dgfurnituremakers.com](http://www.dgfurnituremakers.com).