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# Young & Hungry

The dish on District eats



## Michel Richard Plans to Move His Home Base to Tysons Corner

Posted by [Tim Carman](#) on Apr. 20, 2009, at 12:08 pm



Richard: NoVa bound

**Note: This story was updated on 4:36 p.m. Monday.**

The rumors appear to be true: **Michel Richard**, the city's most celebrated chef, will shift his "home" base to the **Ritz-Carlton, Tysons Corner**, where he will open a new, fine-dining restaurant in the former **Maestro** space. It's not clear yet what the move could mean for **Citronelle**, Richard's current home at the **Latham Hotel** and one of D.C.'s most-honored restaurants, and whether the chef would abandon the spot completely.

**Michel Richard Restaurants** mailed a packet of information to potential investors last week, seeking nearly \$2 million to develop the 5,000-square-foot, 110-seat restaurant inside the Ritz. The celebrity chef, according to the document, "plans to enter into a 10-year primary lease on or about April 30, 2009" for the dining space made famous by chef **Fabio Trabocchi**, who left Maestro in September 2007. The restaurant has been dark since then.

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“Citronelle is not closing...Michel's offices are still there, his kitchen that he loves is still there, and business is going on as usual,” says **Mel Davis**, PR coordinator for Richard. “I have to reiterate, there are no plans to move or close Citronelle from the Latham hotel.”

**Mark Sherwin**, general manager for the Ritz-Carlton, Tysons Corner, emphasized that no contract has been signed for the Maestro space. “We continue to talk to a number of high-profile chefs,” Sherwin said. The Ritz has narrowed the list down to three different groups, the GM added, but Sherwin wasn't at liberty to name any of them.

The investor packet, however, makes it sound like a done deal. The working name of the proposed restaurant is, simply, **Michel Richard**, and it will be considered, according to the investor packet, “Michel Richard's home,” where the chef “will likely be in the kitchen most evenings.”

Those statements clearly imply either the death or the diminishment of Richard's **Citronelle**, which has suffered some indignities in recent months. Last fall, the *Post's* **Tom Sietsema** [docked Citronelle a star in his 2008 Dining Guide](#); in January, the gastronomic temple [laid off a number of employees](#) and cut back on hours; and in March, long-time sommelier, **Mark Slater**, [left Citronelle](#) to work at **Ray's the Steaks** in Arlington.

The statements also pour [cold water on the rumors](#) that firebrand British chef **Gordon Ramsay** will take over the Maestro space. Ramsay's restaurant group was [already facing serious financial troubles](#), and the chef [recently sold his Los Angeles operation](#), **Gordon Ramsay at the London West Hollywood**.

Whether Ramsay or not, however, the Ritz was obviously interested in a celebrity chef for the space. The hotel chain has done well with famous cooks in the kitchen, whether [Eric Ripert at the Westend Bistro](#) or **Dean Fearing** at his eponymous place at the Ritz's Dallas property.

In preparation for Richard, the former Maestro space will be “re-designed in its entirety as a modern French-influenced restaurant” and “will change dramatically from its prior iteration, which, while luxurious, lacked a distinctive independent operator feel.” The restaurant's open kitchen will be “re-tiled to have a more contemporary aesthetic,” while the once-expansive dining room will be broken up into spaces that look, based on preliminary architectural sketches, as if they could be sealed off for private dining. There will also be a chef's table and a bar area with six stools and three cocktail tables.

**Group Goetz Architects**, the same company that designed [Central Michel Richard](#) on Pennsylvania Avenue NW, has been hired to design the Ritz space. No general contractor has been selected yet. Richard's team at his namesake restaurant will include **Carl Halvorson**, currently the director of operations for **Citronelle** and director of operations/partner at **Central**.

The Ritz, according to the investor packet, is providing a “significant build-out allowance” for Richard, but it's apparently not enough to cover all the costs. Richard's team is seeking between \$1.7 million and \$1.8 million to construct what it hopes will be “Washington's finest restaurant.”

Michel Richard is expected to open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner sometime during the fourth quarter of this year.

If the detailed investor packet weren't enough to convince skeptics that Richard is moving his base of operations to the Ritz at Tysons, then the

chef Jeff Heineman for adding th...

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The City Paper editorial staff fanned out across the area yesterday to take a look at the way we ea...

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return address on the mailer itself all but confirms it. According to the envelope, Michel Richard Restaurants is located at 1700 Tysons Blvd. in McLean.

That's the address of the Ritz-Carlton.

*Photo by Darrow Montgomery*



TAGS: [CITRONELLE](#), [FABIO TRABOCCHI](#), [MAESTRO](#), [MICHEL RICHARD](#), [RITZ-CARLTON TYSONS CORNER](#)

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### 13 Responses to "Michel Richard Plans to Move His Home Base to Tysons Corner"

1. *Nikki Nova* Says:

[April 20th, 2009 at 12:40 pm](#)

Good. I used to put on meetings at the Latham, and they were a headache to deal with.

2. *LAT* Says:

[April 20th, 2009 at 1:47 pm](#)

How the eff do they expect to be "Washington's finest restaurant" in TYSON'S?! You can't get there via public transportation and a DC cabbie would laugh in your face and kick you out of his cab if you asked him to take you to Tyson's. As a big fan of Michel Richard, let me be the first to say this is a TERRIBLE idea.

3. *M* Says:

[April 20th, 2009 at 2:04 pm](#)

Um, get over your DC city proper bias. Maestro had a bunch of trouble filling tables didn't it? It was certainly (one of) "Washington's finest restaurants".

4. *Simon* Says:

[April 20th, 2009 at 4:01 pm](#)

They'll do a booming lunch business. See, e.g., Kinkead's outpost there.

5. *AhFoodie* Says:

[April 20th, 2009 at 4:35 pm](#)

Didn't I read about this on donrockwell.com already ?

A. Foodie

6. *Lou* Says:

[April 21st, 2009 at 10:48 am](#)

Tyson's. I actively AVOID going to Tyson's.

7. *MikeInsideguy* Says:

[April 21st, 2009 at 11:01 am](#)

The Unfortunate part of some of the following responses are that they feel like they know what they are talking about!

(1)Fabio wasn't a Washington Guy and didn't get involved in the DC crowd of chefs and wasn't as respected at Miche!

(2)Fabio, was PACKING the house at Maestro. Knowing Many of the principals involved, business wasn't the issue. They did better than most fine dining restaurants in the metro area.

(3)The Problem was HE (Fabio)wasn't happy here! He got a better offer to move back to NYC and make more \$\$\$\$.

So...just be careful of the "facts" you have, because they are more like opinions than fact....Right?

Now....Here's a little something that you didn't know. His partner wears burgundy and gold on this deal!

8. *Mike Richards* Says:

[April 21st, 2009 at 1:13 pm](#)

Yeah, Maestro was one of Northern Virginia's finest restaurants.

9. *monkey2000* Says:  
[April 21st, 2009 at 1:22 pm](#)

I thought Colvin Run Tavern (Kinkeads in Tysons Corner) closed in 2007?

You really have to look at Tysons as a different market than DC. You can't look at it as part of the city. That is not a criticism, just an observation. I think there are many opportunities in Tysons for the right resto.

10. *Citronelle chef heading to Tysons* « *221ohh1... surviving suburbia* Says:  
[April 21st, 2009 at 11:42 pm](#)

[...] Citronelle chef heading to Tysons 2009 April 22 by gordonpbaty I spotted a tweet by Amanda Metrocurean that the chef of Citronelle is establishing his new place in Tysons, right down the road from us. Since Citronelle is considered one of, if not the, best restaurants in DC I perked my ears up. It'll be interesting to see how that shapes up. Here's the article. [...]

11. *Dude* Says:  
[April 22nd, 2009 at 12:03 pm](#)

I wonder if Richard is happy about news of his investment contracts being widely disseminated?

12. *Michel Richard rumors true?* « *Dining In DC* Says:  
[April 22nd, 2009 at 3:14 pm](#)

[...] 22, 2009 by diningindc Washington City Paper's Tim Carman and other DC writers have been on a blogging frenzy! Are the rumors true? Will Michel Richard, one [...]

13. *Dingus* Says:  
[April 23rd, 2009 at 9:36 am](#)

"Knowing Many of the principals involved, business wasn't the issue. They did better than most fine dining restaurants in the metro area."

Running a 40% food cost is good business?  
 The whole point of getting into bed with a Ritz-Carlton or any other mega-luxury hotel is for that hotel to eat up the losses that come with an over-the-top fine dining restaurant. Besides, would you want an old and crumbling frame (The Latham) for your art or would you like the grandest of frames (The Ritz-Carlton) for your life's work? This makes sense.

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