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“Manzanita” restaurant to open inside The Ritz-Carlton Highlands, Lake Tahoe *Traci Des Jardins will open new restaurant in time for ski season at Northstar Resort*

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The Food & Wine Magazine Classic in Aspen is in full-swing pairing the finest culinary talents in the world with the masters of the world's finest wines. In this setting, after several months of speculation, The Ritz-Carlton Highlands, Lake Tahoe and chef Traci Des Jardins announced the name of their joint creation – a restaurant named Manzanita to open later this year in the Northern California mountain resort. “The name Manzanita seemed very fitting for a restaurant in the Lake Tahoe area,” said Traci Des Jardins, chef/partner at Manzanita. “The Manzanita tree is ubiquitous in California, but it particularly reminds me of the Sierra Nevada of my native state. I was inspired by the symbolism of the Manzanita tree and plan to create a menu that reflects the regions rich offerings.”

The menu at Manzanita will be a combination of Des Jardins' signature French inspired California cuisine, with a regional mountain resort influence. Sourcing organic, sustainable and locally grown meat and produce will be important to the food philosophy at Manzanita. The menu items range from bar menu items of Fried Olives, Herbs de Provenance (\$8), Liberty Farms Duck Meatballs with Mission Figs and Lucques Olives (\$14), Dungeness Crab Sliders, Spiced Chutney and Potato Chips (\$14), Prather Ranch Grass-fed Hamburger and Pomes Frites (\$13), Mac-n-Cheese (\$9); to starters of Roasted Beet, Fennel and Little Gem Salad (\$12), Pizza with Pancetta, Goat Cheese, Sundried Tomatoes and Green Onions (\$14); to entrees featuring Red Wine Braised Short Ribs with Horseradish Mashed Potatoes and Herb Salad (\$29), Moroccan Tagine, Chick Peas, Root Vegetables and Preserved Lemon (\$26), to Rotisserie Wolfe Ranch Quail, Bread Salad, Pancetta and raisins (\$26).

“Food always seems to taste better after the physical exertion of a day of skiing or hiking when one wants a hearty and satisfying meal, which is simple and delicious,” said Traci Des Jardins, chef/partner at Manzanita. “I will look to the locale for seasonal inspiration to create a cuisine that is sophisticated yet familiar.”

Manzanita will open inside The Ritz-Carlton Highlands, Lake Tahoe located mid-mountain in Northstar resort later this year in time for ski season. “This is the first time a nationally known chef has created a destination restaurant in Lake Tahoe, it will appeal to longtime Tahoe locals as well as new guests experiencing The Ritz-Carlton and Lake Tahoe for the first time,” said Allen Highfield, General Manager of The Ritz-Carlton Highlands resort. In addition to the culinary talents of Chef Des Jardins, named “Best Chef: Pacific” by the James Beard Foundation in 2007, The Ritz-Carlton has commissioned the restaurant design team at The Johnson Studio to create the interior design for the restaurant.

At the 94-seat Manzanita restaurant along with 71-seat bar and lounge area inside The Ritz-Carlton Highlands, Lake Tahoe, it is all about the kitchen and acclaimed chef Traci Des Jardins. From the moment you enter the restaurant, the design radiates warmth, texture and natural materials. The open kitchen is visible from all vantage points in the restaurant, showcasing the chef's organic cuisine. “We drew our direction and inspiration for the design from Traci: her fondness of the beauty of nature, her love of contemporary design and her passion for excellence,” said Bill Johnson, principal at The Johnson Studio. “All of those elements are perfectly aligned in a restaurant that is both stimulating yet comfortable at the same time.” Other recent projects of The Johnson Studio include Fearing's at The Ritz-Carlton, Dallas, Texas, Kevin Rathbun's in Atlanta, Georgia and Restaurant Tru in Chicago, Illinois.

James Beard Award-Winning Chef Traci Des Jardins was raised on a farm in California's San Joaquin Valley and developed a deep love for the earth and its bounty at an early age. The Des Jardins dinner table featured produce from the garden and game from the land in dishes reflecting her family's rich Mexican and Louisianan-French Acadian heritage. She had first dreamed of being a downhill ski racer and then a veterinarian, but always found herself drawn to the heat and creativity of the kitchen.

Prior to opening Jardinière, she spent time in Los Angeles and New York working with some of the country's top chefs, further honing her craft in France where she apprenticed with legendary chefs including Michel and Pierre Troisgros, Alain Senderens, Alain Ducasse, and Alain Passard. In 1998, Traci opened Jardinière and has made it one of the most sought-after reservations in San Francisco. Following that success, she opened Mijita Cocina Mexicana in 2004 in the San Francisco Ferry Building, combining the best of Bay Area seasonal and local ingredients with the traditional Mexican flavors of her youth. Traci also serves as managing chef for the popular Acme Chophouse, a modern steakhouse that features naturally-raised grilled and roasted meats and poultry, locally-caught fish, and produce from small, local organic farms. Beyond the kitchen, Traci is a deeply committed activist and philanthropist.

For more information about The Ritz-Carlton Highlands, Lake Tahoe please contact Steven H. Holt at 530-550-2770 or visit www.ritzcarlton.com/laketahoe.

The Ritz-Carlton Highlands, Lake Tahoe is the first new-build resort development in the Lake Tahoe area in decades. Anticipated to be the premier Northern California refined mountain retreat, The Ritz-Carlton will introduce its legendary service in late 2009, a service level before unseen in Lake Tahoe. The \$300 million project, situated mid-mountain in the Northstar-at-Tahoe ski area will feature ski-in, ski-out access with mountain valet services, Manzanita, the resort's signature restaurant created by renowned San Francisco chef Traci Des Jardins, a 17,000 square foot spa and fitness center and preferred access to the Old Greenwood and Coyote Moon golf courses. An inter-mountain gondola will connect guests between the nearby Village at Northstar and the The Ritz-Carlton Highlands, Lake Tahoe resort. Perched slope-side within a 15 minute drive of both Lake Tahoe and the historic town of Truckee, the year-round destination includes 170 guest rooms, 23 private Ritz-Carlton Residences and 25 Ritz-Carlton Club fractional ownership units. The resort is currently under construction and is on schedule to open its doors in time for ski season later this year.

The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, L.L.C., of Chevy Chase, Md., currently operates 72 hotels in the Americas, Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and the Caribbean. More than 30 hotel and residential projects are under development around the globe with future openings including Dubai International Financial Centre, United Arab Emirates; Dove Mountain, Tucson, Arizona; and Lake Tahoe, California. The Ritz-Carlton is the only service company to have twice earned the prestigious Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, which recognizes outstanding customer service. For more information, or reservations, contact a travel professional, call toll free in the U.S. 1-800-241-3333, or visit the company web site at www.ritzcarlton.com.