



# The Prado

Culinary arts and arts history reign at the House of Hospitality in famed Balboa Park

By Jeanne Ferris

All photography courtesy of the Cohn Restaurant Group

The official hostess of The Prado is not human; she is, in fact, made of limestone, sculpted from the vision of Donal Hord, a celebrated artist once home to San Diego. She is the lovingly restored 'Lady of Tehuantepec,' an Aztec woman perched atop a fountain pool, surrounded by a courtyard of palms and a Spanish arcade. A popular San Diego treasure, she was originally crafted for the 1935 California Pacific International Exposition, and was rebuilt in 1997 as a near-exact replica.

Strains of Rosemary Clooney crooning "come on-a my house" waft into The Prado's foyer as a greeting. From the terra cotta tiles and original stenciled ceiling pattern of 16th century Spanish design, to the verandah and Casa del Rey Moro garden, rich art history is experienced throughout this faithfully restored 400-seat restaurant and lounge, originally christened as the 'Palace of Foreign Domestic Arts;' remodeled in 1934 by

architect Richard S. Requa, the building was subsequently renamed the 'House of Hospitality,' and is a registered National Landmark.

With five menus of choice and a number of gluten-free options, including a quintessential kid's menu, the flavors and selections are like a trip around the world. Serving an array of seafood, greens and game, the restaurant's California Cuisine was recently refined by the talents of Executive Chef Jonathan Hale – having joined The Prado's culinary team in 2010. Freshness and quality are their secret.

According to Hale – who was born in India, raised in London and completed his studies on the East Coast, "being able to create a dish, market it, execute it, and do it all over again the next day [is what I enjoy the most]. It just doesn't get old."

The signature appetizer is a wafer-thin sliced Kobe beef sushi roll filled with grilled asparagus, wasabi cream and ponzu dipping sauce, layered



with tobiko aioli (Pacific Ocean flying fish roe).

The Prado seafood paella is a heavenly golden ochre tribute to Spain; a concoction of fresh whitefish, mussels, shrimp, calamari, chicken, and chorizo, it is cooked in a lobster saffron broth and masterfully orchestrated on a mound of perfectly cooked saffron rice.

In keeping with the Latin theme, The Prado's tres leches cake offered on the dessert menu is a small plate of edible artwork. The palm-size round, exquisitely moist cake sits atop a circular lime green pistachio meringue; inside the meringue, is a delightful surprise of sliced caramel bananas, which is coquettishly paired with a scoop of creamy vanilla bean ice cream. There is not a food snob in the world that can resist one divine bite.

Chef Hale generously took some time recently to share his thoughts on his personal culinary journey and what he enjoys the most in the kitchen.

**Q:** *What inspired you to pursue a career in the culinary arts?*

**Hale:** *I grew up in London, and we traveled through Europe every summer. Travel and food have always*

*gone hand-in-hand, and seemed like a natural fit for me.*

**Q:** *What is your favorite comfort food to make at home?*

**Hale:** *Probably, French toast for my two kids.*

**Q:** *What is your signature dish?*

**Hale:** *Again, probably French toast for my kids!*

**Q:** *What is the most essential ingredient in the kitchen for you?*

**Hale:** *Teamwork.*

**Q:** *What do you think is the most adaptable food to work with?*

**Hale:** *Fresh seafood, because you don't have to do too much to make it taste great.*

**Q:** *What country would be on your bucket list to eat your way through?*

**Hale:** *All of Southeast Asia; this could take awhile, though. ♦*

**The Prado**  
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