

# FOOD ARTS

AT THE RESTAURANT and HOTEL FOREFRONT

## Front Burner

EDITED BY BEVERLY STEPHEN

one was hurt, the incident caused a delay. While railroad authorities came out to investigate, the engineer and crew sat biding their time on one of the cornerstones of Xanadu's pleasure domes. Enter intrepid sous chef **Brandon Peacock**, who seized the moment and a couple of menus. Minutes later head chef **Alexander Ong** hand-delivered roasted "Hainan" chicken starters with lettuce wrap and ginger sauce to the bewildered but grateful railroad men. It made an impression. Two days later, Xanadu's phone rang. The UP crew was calling ahead a couple of miles up the line, ordering up some chow to-go. As it's forbidden to make unscheduled stops, the train merely slowed as it approached Xanadu, allowing one of the crew to hop off and make the swap, cash for Xanadu's "Chinese chicken tacos." According to Ong, Xanadu rail-side service has won them some new customers, as the men have actually been back several times since, leaving their locomotive behind. —DAVID GILBERT

**Just rehearsing Seattle**—In 1999 **Kathy Casey's Food Studios** received the Seattle mayor's Small Business Award, even though the "virtual restaurant" had virtually no customers. What's going on here?

Behind a humble brick facade in Seattle's rough-and-tumble Ballard neighborhood, chef and restaurant consultant **Kathy Casey** has created the world's first "virtual restaurant." It's fully loaded with state-of-the-art equipment, including Randell refrigeration; Univex mixers; Wood Stone wood-fired rotisserie, grill, and pizza oven; and smooth-gliding Metro shelving in an enviably efficient pantry. The granite bar is stocked with sparkling stemware and everyone's favorite brands. The dining room and lounge are furnished with antique Louis XIV gilded chairs and settees. But don't try to have dinner here, or lunch, or any other meal for that matter. Customers are not part of the equation.

"It's kind of like a chef's dream," kids Casey. "The perfect kitchen, and all the food, but no demanding customers." The facility is a commercial testing ground for restaurateurs who want to practice their art far from the madding crowd of hungry diners.



In 1988, Casey started Kazy & Associates, a restaurant consulting firm. "We needed a place where my clients could go to develop their recipes and try out new equipment," she explains, "and so when this building became available, we jumped." Mesher Shing Architects and Duren Hewitt Commercial Construction refurbished the historic 3,000-square-foot space originally built in 1889.

Working closely with Casey are her husband, John, and associates Steve Hayter and Diana Isaiou. John Casey, a former wine steward for **Windows on the World** in New York City, serves as wine consultant and "front-of-the-house guy."

Together the team offers a range of services, from new restaurant concept development to detail-oriented customized recipe and procedure manuals. From front-of-the-house POS and service training to food cost analysis and waste reduction, the food studio is a full-service restaurant development and food testing resource, quite unlike any other. Clients include **Restaurants Unlimited**, the **Paul Allen Group**, **Marriott Conference Hotels**, **Carlson Restaurants Worldwide**, **Tyson**, **Cinnabon**, and others.

—GREG ATKINSON