



VAIL

# FLAME AT THE FOUR SEASONS

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by **LAUREN GLENDENNING**  
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Flame just might be the most fun fine dining experience in the valley. No stuffiness here — just amazing food, a cozy atmosphere and, well, amazing food.

This might be the Four Seasons, but it's still the Rocky Mountains, which is why executive chef Jason Harrison's culinary artistry often takes a no-frills approach to elaborate dishes.

He'll tell you his prawns cocktail dish is his take on classic shrimp cocktail, so you imagine a martini glass with shrimp and cocktail sauce. Instead, you get a gorgeous plate of New Caledonia prawns — heads and all — with avocado puree, fresh grapefruit, green apple, pepitas and micro cilantro. The flavors are clean and fresh, and nothing like an old-school shrimp cocktail (thankfully).

This first course dish reminds you that you're not eating dinner in a steakhouse doing the same old traditional steakhouse fare. At Flame, you're eating something special.

Harrison has built a reputation in town

with whimsical dishes like his famous Rocky Mountain Elk "Corn Dogs" — that's right, corn dogs at the Four Seasons. He wasn't sure they'd be a hit with the clientele at first, but now he'd probably face a revolution if he took them off the menu.

Not everything is playful, but everything is thoughtful. There's not a single ingredient on any plate that doesn't have a purpose. Even the few obligatory steakhouse dishes he offers — such as lobster bisque — are reborn with new flavors. He uses coconut milk, lemongrass and Kaffir lime in the bisque, energizing it with Thai flavors that make it so much more interesting than a standard sherry bisque. It's fantastic.

And while beef and game are kings at Flame, Harrison lightens things up on his summer menu. A summer meal at Flame can actually be guilt-free.

His silky-smooth spring watermelon-jalepeño gazpacho is the perfect bowl of summer. Sometime around mid-July when Palisade peaches are harvested, he'll transition to a peach gazpacho with Marcona almonds and young mint grown right outside in the Four Seasons' spa garden. Ask beverage director/sommelier Steven Teaver to pair it with the perfect

white or his latest craft cocktail.

For those with a more handy appetite, don't worry — the summer menu has plenty of meaty options like a Wagyu New York Strip, cooked to a juicy medium rare and so tender you can cut it with the side of your fork, or bison, filet mignon, Berkshire pork and lamb. And the sauces — oh the sauces! A sampling of all six comes out with any meat dish. My personal favorites are the Charleston truffle, the blackberry bourbon and the yuzu smooth. And there's not enough space on this page to describe how incredible each and every one of the a la carte side dishes — there are about a dozen to choose from — are, especially the Kim Chi Brussels sprouts.

New to the summer menu is a braised rabbit with Colorado porcini mushroom ragout and house-made — there's not

much that isn't house-made — ricotta.

And of course the burger bar will be rocking all summer long, a reservations-only experience in which you can build your own killer burgers as you dine right in the kitchen (24-hour-advance notice required).

Perhaps the most exciting part of Flame this summer, though, are the weekly barbecues out by the Four Seasons pool every Thursday from 4-6:30 p.m. The first one will feature a wild game menu that Harrison can't wait to cook and you can't wait to attend. •

**TOP LEFT** 16-ounce bone-in dry-aged ribeye and Caladonia sweet shrimp.

**TOP RIGHT** Lobster bisque with lemongrass, Kaffir lime and red curry.

**ABOVE** Slow-braised pork cheek with fava beans and cauliflower puree.

**PRICE** Apps: \$12 - \$18; Entrees, \$32 - \$50. • **AMBIANCE** Mountain elegant, sophisticated yet cozy. • **SIGNATURE DISH** Meat is king, but summer standouts include Palisade peach gazpacho, slow-braised Heritage pork cheeks and a braised rabbit.