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The Westin Imagine Orlando Appoints Robert Mason as Executive Chef of Fiorella's Cucina Toscana

Former Executive Chef of Kessler's Grand Bohemian Hotel

Orlando, FL – (January 30, 2009) The Westin Imagine Orlando is pleased to announce the appointment of Robert Mason as Executive Chef of Fiorella's Cucina Toscana restaurant. As a multi-award-winning chef, his culinary achievements will bring a new dimension to the hotel's signature restaurant, banquet and catering facilities.

Originally from the San Francisco Bay area, Chef Robert Mason brings over 20 years of experience to the Westin Imagine Orlando. Formally trained during a three-year apprenticeship under Italian master chef Ermes Paulin, it wasn't long before Mason was named executive chef of the world famous Vic Stewart's Steak House in Walnut Creek, CA.

During his tenure at Vic Stewart's, the restaurant was named the number one restaurant in America for innovation by the National Beef Council. Following his career at Vic Stewart's, Mason landed an executive chef position at the California Café, for which he worked in both the Sausalito and Los Gatos locations. When California Café decided to open a new location in Orlando, Mason was chosen to help lead that venture including designing their menus. Under his direction, the California Café was named one of the top 20 restaurants in Florida, by *Florida Trend Magazine*.

In 2001, Chef Mason a-self-described perfectionist- made a move to The Kessler Collection's Grand Bohemian Hotel. Under Mason's direction, The Boheme restaurant was consistently recognized as one of the top rated restaurants in the Florida market. Some of the accolades and awards that the restaurant received during his tenure were: the AAA Four-Diamond designation, *Florida Trend Magazine's* "Top 20 Best New Restaurants and Top 500", *Orlando Sentinel's* Foodie Award Winner/Critic's Choice for "Best Power Lunch", *Orlando Magazine's* Dining Award Recipient for "Best Restaurant", "Best Hotel Restaurant", "Best Brunch" and named in the Zagat Survey as a "Top American Restaurant" and was inducted into the prestigious *Nation Restaurant News* Fine Dining Hall of Fame.

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Chef Mason has also garnered recognition when he was invited as a guest chef at the prestigious James Beard House in New York City and has called this a defining moment in his career.

Chef Mason has been able to make a strong impact on the Orlando market's culinary scene through his passion for artistic culinary expression. Having a constant drive to find a new angle, and never satisfied with yesterday's accomplishments he is always striving for a new inspiration. Drawing his influence from fresh ingredients complimented by an intriguing array of flavors from around the world, his eclectic yet harmonious cuisine brings a dynamic perspective to classic techniques. In the tradition of great artists, Mason can breathe new life into any menu.

"Chef Robert is a culinary celebrity in Central Florida and we are proud to have him as our executive chef. He brings tremendous talent, artful displays and creative cuisine to our culinary team," states Mike Speicher, general manager of the Westin Imagine Orlando.

Fiorella's Cucina Toscana offers upscale dining in a fun, relaxed atmosphere. The menu offers simple, fresh and authentic Italian dishes from the regions of Tuscany and northern Italy. Fiorella's wine list offers Old World selections from Italy and New World tastes from California, Australia and emerging wine regions. The dining room ambiance combines a Tuscan theme charm with casual contemporary elegance and showcases original blown-glass art works by Orlando artist Charles Keila. The colorful abstract pieces represent natural elements including "Millefiore" or "decorative glass designs" that bloom on the restaurant's honey-toned Venetian-plaster walls. Al-fresco dining, a pool bar and room service offer guests a wide variety of selections.

Fiorella's is open every day for breakfast, lunch and dinner. For additional information or reservations, please call 407.233.2950, or visit www.westin.com/imagineorlando.

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Editor's Note: Photos available upon request