

# Innovative Dining in Bolingbrook

By Helen A. Lee

Eating satisfies one of our most basic needs, and basic food will do the job just fine. But genuinely innovative food, served with care in beautiful surroundings and inspired by world cuisine—that's hard to find. Woodlands At The Promenade allows its guests to enjoy this rare treat close to both I-355 and I-55 in Bolingbrook.

The restaurant has a look inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright even though it was designed by award-winning Dallas architect Bruce Russo. The casual yet tranquil Bolingbrook restaurant includes waterfalls, clean geometric shapes and natural materials similar to Wright's Fallingwater (the Edgar J. Kauffman, Sr. residence). Woodlands generates an air of modern elegance with heart in the signature Wright style; a massive flagstone fireplace, large open areas and blocky separating walls to allow a cozy nook or two within the larger space. All embody modern interpretations of Wright's ideas.

The choice of décor is indeed an apt one, because Wright was known for pushing the envelope when it came to creating a new American architecture—and Woodlands offers American cuisine with a similar goal. Like Wright, Woodlands chef Ernesto Palaia has been inspired by classic American tastes. But his palette encompasses a global scope, and one can see influences from Asia, Europe, South America, New York, New England, and the Midwest in his original creations.

Among the dishes offered on just the Small Plate Menu are glazed salmon with a honey-unagi sauce, East Coast crab cake, lettuce cups with gingered beef and mushrooms, and a pizzette with tomatoes, onions, goat cheese and arugula. While considered "small plate" offerings, these generously-sized dishes supply more than enough to share.

A larger diversity is available on the brunch, lunch and dinner menus. From high-quality Kobe beef brisket pasta to slow-roasted short ribs and Hawaiian-prepared tuna, the 17 selections on the dinner menu alone consist of hearty comfort foods and upscale entrees with delicate flavor blends. Other masterfully prepared

treats like mascarpone and blueberry pancakes, mahogany chicken, and seafood served less than 24 hours after coming off a fishing boat illustrate the passion and the artistry behind the food.

Pushing the envelope is something Woodlands does with its wine offerings. With 64 wines by the glass, almost 100 by the bottle, monthly wine dinners are a given. But Woodlands goes a step further, offering regular wine flights so guests can discover the perfect accompaniment to its varied menu offerings.

Additional events include Happy Hour specials, monthly Martini & Manicure Mondays with added services provided by salons, bridal shows, and live jazz every Saturday night. The Woodlands also has a cozy private dining room for group celebrations and corporate events. Guests will even see Chef Palaia making his nightly rounds of the dining room, gauging their satisfaction and giving a face to the Woodlands name.

This part of the restaurant's mission is something Wright would have approved based on his ideals of family life, the close-knit communities he created with his associates, and his pleasure in extravagance. He said once, "Give me the luxuries of life and I will willingly do without the necessities." At Woodlands Grill, it's easy to follow this maxim, and do it with style.

**WOODLANDS**  
At The Promenade

**Woodlands At The Promenade**  
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## Editor's Notes:

I visited Woodlands a while back to sample Chef Palaia's dishes for this article and was really impressed with the uniqueness of his small plate menu (which isn't all that small). Everything I tried was excellent from the lump crab cakes to the sauces on glazed salmon.

